

Cati, Mehmet Osman (2013) The political economy of Syrian foreign policy 1949-1963. PhD Thesis. SOAS, University of London

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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SYRIAN FOREIGN POLICY 1949-1963

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in Politics and
International Studies

2013

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Syria's foreign policy in the post-colonial period and presents Syria as a state that exhibited the basic characteristics of the states of the global South that came to independent statehood burdened with varying degrees of underdevelopment, vulnerability, dependence and permeability. It is contended that foreign policy in a country like Syria was bound to be preoccupied with the task of overcoming these debilitating conditions or making them manageable.

A political economy approach in which socio-economic needs of the country are taken as a source of foreign policy and the acquisition of foreign economic resources as a major foreign policy objective is adopted as a point of departure in this study. While Syria is presented as part of the global South, it is recognised that Syria has a shared Arab identity with the other Arab states of the Middle East. Therefore this study also draws on Constructivist insights on the impact of shared-identities on state behaviour. Moreover, as it is recognised that policy makers have multiple objectives that may reinforce or undermine one another, two other major objectives are considered alongside mobilisation of resources for economic development. These are the goals of independence/autonomy and leadership maintenance/regime consolidation. This study contends that the interaction of these three objectives as a complex process that involves trade offs and changing priorities is worth pursuing because it provides fundamental insights into a polity's foreign policy and contributes to its understanding.

This study also makes a case for and provides empirical evidence that reflects the interconnectedness of 'considerations of plenty' and 'considerations of power'; the overlapping of domestic politics and foreign policy; and the contextual nature of the separation of issues of 'high' and 'low' politics.

With its emphasis on the quest for resources to foster economic development, this study makes a contribution to the study of foreign policy and enhances our understanding of the processes of state formation and regime consolidation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have incurred a long list of debts researching and writing this thesis. It is my honour to acknowledge the gratitude I owe to everyone who helped me complete this study.

My deepest appreciation goes to Professor Charles Tripp who kind-heartedly took over as my supervisor in the later stages of my study and made its successful completion possible and to Professor Eberhard Kienle who supervised my work in its initial stages and contributed to its development. I have greatly benefited from their insightful feedback, support and understanding.

I am also grateful to Dr. Katerina Dalacoura of the LSE and Dr. Adham Saouli of University of Edinburgh for their invaluable comments, encouragement and help.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Professor William Hale and Professor Trevor Marchand for the invaluable support they provided when I needed it most. At the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), I also would like to thank Research Tutors of the Department of Politics and International Studies Dr. John Sidel and Dr. Matthew Nelson for their assistance and backing. I am also grateful to Dr. Bengisu Rona and Muaadh Salih for enabling me to follow the undergraduate Arabic courses at the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Studies.

I would like to express my thanks to all Syrians who helped me in my research during my fieldwork in Syria. I am also deeply grateful to many teachers, professors, colleagues, friends and family members who have been gracious with their assistance, advice, support and encouragement at different stages of my studies and academic pursuits. Permit me to mention Professors Ersin Kalaycıoğlu and Gün Kut at Boğaziçi University; Professors Şule Kut and Nihal Kara at Marmara University; Adnan Çevik, Bülent Yorulmaz, Aynur Yıldırım, Nuray Ayhan, Erkan Turhan, Haşim Kafalı, Bekir Tuncer, Ergün Demirel and Ali Yıldız at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University; Sadek Celal al-‘Azm and Adnan Sulayman at Damascus University; Michel Kilo, Ibrahim Hamidi, Abdallah Dardari, Muhammad Hussein, Hassan Abbas, Patrick Seale, Stéphane Valter, Annabelle Böttcher, Jubin Goodarzi, Sonoko Sunayama, Ken Imai, Hiroyuki Aoyama, Yan Lambiel, Fathi, Nadine Menderes, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Özgür Yalvaç, Barney Speed-Grenfell, Atila Kalaycıoğlu, Bill Jameson, Tony Minoldo, Anna and Kostas Chronopoulou, Alison and İsmail Tokalak, Öznur Ayman, Ayhan Kaya, Erhan Doğan, Yılmaz Pirli, Meryem Kuzey, Murat Tuncer, Faik Yazar, Abdullah Çatı, Bedri Emrah,

Beşir Oktay, Sururi Baykal, Göktürk Işıkpınar, Herbert Saller and Caroline Delph. They deserve my warmest appreciation and gratitude.

My endless thanks to Alpay Beler for his help and encouragement which has always been timely and effective. I am most grateful for his friendship, enduring support and the best of times we spent together.

I have also greatly benefited from the language and research facilities of the following institutions during this long enterprise: Institut Français d'Etudes Arabes de Damas and Asad Library in Damascus; the libraries of Boğaziçi University, Bilkent University and Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University in Turkey; the British Library, the libraries of SOAS and the London School of Economics and Political Science in London; and Bodleian Library in Oxford. I acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of their staff.

I stand indebted to Dr. Patrick Keane, Consultant Vascular Surgeon Mr. Daryll Baker and the staff of the Royal Free Hospital for their care and help in my recovery from the rather unexpected complications of a critical operation. That whole saga has taught me to appreciate the significance of the quite simple yet the most precious things we naturally take for granted.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to Patricia Smith who read the draft chapters of this thesis and offered valuable comments. She never tired of encouraging me to cross the final bridge and finish this study. I am most grateful for that and for the organic hand roasted coffee batches that lifted my spirits each time they unexpectedly arrived.

This thesis is dedicated to my mother Muazzez Çatı and to the memory of my father Fethullah Çatı as well as to my siblings Raci, Özgür and Öznur. Without their love, encouragement and unwavering support this study would never have been completed. They deserve far more gratitude than I can express here.

ABBREVIATIONS and CURRENCIES

Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| APD | <i>Arab Political Documents</i> |
| ARR | <i>Arab Report and Record</i> |
| ASBP | Arab Socialist Ba'th Party |
| BBC/SWB | British Broadcasting Corporation, <i>Summary of World Broadcasts</i> , Part IV, The Arab World, Israel, Greece, Turkey and Persia |
| BSL | Banque de Syrie et du Liban |
| CBS | Central Bank of Syria |
| CCC | Currency and Credit Council |
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency |
| DMZ | Demilitarised Zone |
| DLF | Development Loan Fund |
| EIU/QERS | Economist Intelligence Unit, <i>Quarterly Economic Review of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan</i> |
| ESE | <i>Etudes sur la Syrie économique</i> , [cited as ESE, (year of data)]. |
| FPA | Foreign Policy Analysis |
| FRUS | <i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i> |
| GNP | Gross National Product |
| HIPC | Highly Indebted Poor Countries |
| IBRD (World Bank) | International Bank for Reconstruction and Development |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| IPC | Iraq Petroleum Company |
| IR | International Relations |
| MECS | <i>Middle East Contemporary Survey</i> |
| MEE | <i>Middle East Economist</i> |
| MEED | <i>Middle East Economic Digest</i> |
| MEEP | <i>Middle East Economic Papers</i> |
| MEES | <i>Middle East Economic Survey</i> |
| MEJ | <i>The Middle East Journal</i> |
| MENA | Middle East and North Africa |
| Mizan | <i>Mizan Newsletter: A Review of Soviet Writing on the Middle East</i> |

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| NCPE | New Comparative Political Economy |
| NIEO | New International Economic Order |
| Rapport (year of data) | <i>Rapport (year of data) sur l'économie syrienne</i> |
| SAR | Syrian Arab Republic |
| SCP | Syrian Communist Party |
| SSA | <i>Syrian Statistical Abstract</i> |
| SSNP | Syrian Social Nationalist Party |
| Tapline | Trans-Arabian Pipeline Company |
| UAR | United Arab Republic |
| UNRWA | United Nations Relief and Works Administration |

Currencies

| | |
|----|-----------------------|
| SL | Syrian Liras (Pounds) |
| \$ | US Dollars |
| £ | Pounds Sterling |
| DM | German Marks |
| FF | French Francs |

NOTE on TRANSLITERATION

As a general rule, Arabic words and names have been spelled as simply as possible, basically in accordance with the system applied by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, but without diacritics and with *ayn* and *hamzas* indicated by a prime. Moreover if currently used, English names of countries, cities, rivers etc. have been preferred to their Arabic equivalents.

TABLE of CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Abstract | iii |
| Acknowledgements | iv |
| List of Abbreviations and Currencies | vi |
| Note on Transliteration | viii |
| | |
| 1. Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1. The Theoretical Framework and the Choice of Syria as the Subject of Enquiry | 2 |
| 1.2. Methodology, Sources and Plan of the Study | 16 |
| | |
| 2. Foreign Policy Analysis, the Global South, and the Middle East An Explorative Review | 20 |
| 2.1. Introduction | 20 |
| 2.2. Foreign Policy Analysis: An Explorative Review | 22 |
| 2.2.1. The Explanandum of Foreign Policy Analysis | 23 |
| 2.2.2. Actors in Foreign Policy Analysis | 34 |
| 2.2.3. On the Subject Matter of Foreign Policy Analysis: ‘High Politics’ vs. ‘Low Politics’ | 37 |
| 2.3. Foreign Policy Analysis and the Third World/Global South | 46 |
| 2.3.1. The Term ‘Third World’ as an Analytical Category | 46 |
| 2.3.2. The Study of Foreign Policy and the Third World/Global South | 51 |
| 2.4. The Study of International Relations and Foreign Policies of the Middle East: Contemporary Perspectives, Frameworks, and Studies on Post-Colonial Syria | 59 |
| | |
| 3. Precarious Independence and the Regime of Husni al-Za’im, March-August 1949 | 76 |
| 3.1. Introduction | 76 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 3.2. The Emergence of Syria as a State of the Global South: | |
| The Historical Legacy of Colonialism | 77 |
| 3.3. The Regime of Husni al-Za'im, March-August 1949 | 80 |
| 3.3.1. Early Reactions to the Coup and Overcoming the Hurdle of Recognition | 81 |
| 3.3.2. Attempts at Regime Consolidation | 84 |
| 3.3.3. The Monetary Agreement with France | 87 |
| 3.3.4. Pipeline Agreements with Oil Companies | 88 |
| 3.3.5. Syrian-Israeli Armistice Agreement and the Peace Offer | 92 |
| 3.4. Conclusion | 99 |
| 4. Economic Growth amidst Political Instability, August 1949-March 1954 | 102 |
| 4.1. Introduction | 102 |
| 4.2. Hinnawi's Interlude, August 1949-December 1949 | 103 |
| 4.2.1. Elections and the Question of Unity with Iraq | 107 |
| 4.3. The Rule of Shishakli | 109 |
| 4.4. Expanding Role of the State in the Syrian Economy and Indicators of Change | 112 |
| 4.4.1. Limitations on Monetary Policy and Institution Building | 112 |
| 4.4.2. The Regulation, Protection and Promotion of Industry, Agriculture and Trade | 114 |
| 4.4.3. International Trade Agreements | 116 |
| 4.4.4. Development Planning and Public Investment in Development Projects | 118 |
| 4.4.5. Foreign Trade and Balance of Payments | 122 |
| 4.4.6. Central Government Receipts and Expenditures | 124 |
| 4.5. The Search for Financial Aid | 125 |
| 4.6. End of Shishakli's Regime and Concluding Remarks | 133 |
| 5. The Poisoned Chalice and Foregone Sovereignty, 1954-1958 | 135 |
| 5.1. Introduction | 135 |
| 5.2. A Political Overview | 136 |
| 5.3. The Economy: Trends and Obstacles | 141 |

| | |
|--|----------------|
| 5.3.1. Ordinary Budgeted Expenditures and Revenues of the Central Government | 145 |
| 5.3.2. Formulation of Economic Development Programmes | 146 |
| 5.4. The Quest for Additional Resources | 149 |
| 5.4.1. The Drive for Trade Agreements | 149 |
| 5.4.2. The Direction of Syria's Foreign Trade | 153 |
| 5.4.3. The New Pipeline Agreement | 155 |
| 5.4.4. Suez Crisis and Economic Implications for Syria | 156 |
| 5.4.5. The Struggle over Baghdad Pact: A Complementary Dimension | 158 |
| 5.4.6. The Rejection of the World Bank Loan | 162 |
| 5.4.7. The Award of Contracts: From 'Low Politics' to 'High Politics' | 164 |
| 5.4.8. Dreams Accomplished or the Poisoned Chalice: The Syrian-Soviet Economic and Technical Co-operation Agreement | 167 |
| 5.4.9. Reactions to the Agreement | 173 |
| 5.4.10. Rush to the Union | 178 |
| 5.5. Conclusion | 180 |
| 6. Separatist Regime, 1961-1963 | 184 |
| 6.1. Introduction | 184 |
| 6.2. Economic Performance of the Union: Some Indicators | 187 |
| 6.3. Economic Development Plans | 189 |
| 6.4. Foreign Credits: A Marked Attempt at Diversification | 191 |
| 6.4.1. Euphrates Project: UAR-West German Agreement | 195 |
| 6.4.2. American Aid to Syria | 197 |
| 6.4.3. Diversification and Economic Development Performance | 198 |
| 6.5. The End of the Union and the Formation of a Separatist Regime | 200 |
| 6.5.1. Cairo's Shadow and Recognition | 202 |
| 6.5.2. <i>Rapprochement</i> with Neighbours | 202 |
| 6.5.3. The Pressing Financial Bottleneck | 207 |
| 6.5.4. Higher Oil Transit Fees, the Tapline's Turn | 208 |
| 6.5.5. Tapping into the West and Steps towards Economic Liberalisation | 208 |
| 6.5.6. Testing Waters in Moscow | 210 |
| 6.5.7. The Separatist Regime and Economic Development | 211 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 6.5.8. Foreign Aid: Yes to West, Yea to East | 213 |
| 6.5.9. West German Aid for Euphrates Project: Reality or Illusion? | 217 |
| 6.5.10. The Separatist Regime: Success or Failure? | 221 |
| 7. Analysis and Conclusion | 225 |
| 7.1. Introduction | 225 |
| 7.2. Summing Up and Analysis | 226 |
| 7.3. Concluding Remarks | 235 |
| Statistical Appendix | 237 |
| Tables | |
| 1. The Population of Syria by Religious Communities and Muhafaza in 1957 | 238 |
| 2. Gross Investment in Syria by Sector, 1950-1963 | 239 |
| 3. Direction of Trade, 1951-1963 | 240 |
| 4. Balance of Trade, 1961-1963 | 242 |
| 5. Syrian Trade with Egypt 1953-1963 | 243 |
| 6. Budgetary and Extrabudgetary Expenditures and Receipts of Central Government 1949-1953 | 244 |
| 7. Estimated Ordinary Revenues of Central Government and Their Percentage Composition 1949-1963 | 245 |
| 8. Estimated Ordinary Expenditures of Central Government and Their Percentage Composition, 1949-1963 | 247 |
| 9. Cultivated, Cropped and Irrigated Areas, Selected Years | 249 |
| 10. Area, Production, Exported Quantity and Export Value of Three Main Crops, 1951-1963 | 250 |
| 11. Total Export Proceeds of Wheat, Barley and Cotton as a Percentage of Total Value of Exports, 1951-1963 | 251 |
| 12. Syrian Cotton Exports, 1951-1957 and 1961-1963 | 252 |
| 13. Expropriated and Distributed Land in Syria, 1959-1968 | 253 |
| 14. Allocations under the Syrian Seven-Year (1955-1961) Extraordinary Development Budget | 254 |
| 15. Investment Programme, The First Five-Year Plan 1960/61-1964/65 | 255 |
| 16. Means of Financing, The First Five-Year Plan 1960/61-1964/65 | 256 |
| Bibliography | 257 |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

How does foreign policy relate to a country's political weaknesses, socio-economic needs and its resource endowment? How do characteristics of states affect the articulation of foreign policy goals and preferences? What were the main concerns of the leaders of the states that were burdened with varying degrees of underdevelopment, vulnerability, dependence and permeability at their independence? What were their foreign policy objectives and how did these objectives interact? Why were the foreign policies of these states 'understudied' if not completely ignored?

These theoretical questions guide this study whose main purpose is to adopt a political economy approach as a point of departure to examine Syria's foreign policy in the post-World War II period. In this endeavour, Syria is taken as a state that exhibited the basic characteristics of the global South (formerly the Third World) that came to independent statehood burdened with varying degrees of underdevelopment, vulnerability, dependence and permeability. It is contended that foreign policy in a country like Syria was bound to be preoccupied with the task of overcoming these debilitating conditions or making them manageable. Moreover, while this study views Syria as part of the global South, it also acknowledges that Syria has a shared Arab identity with the other Arab states of the Middle East. Therefore it also draws on Constructivist insights on the impact of shared-identities on state behaviour.

A political economy approach in which socio-economic needs of the country are taken as a source of foreign policy and the acquisition of foreign economic resources as a major foreign policy objective is adopted as a point of departure in this study. Moreover, as it is recognised that policy makers have multiple objectives that may reinforce or undermine one another, two other major objectives are considered alongside mobilisation of resources for economic development. These are the goals of independence/autonomy and leadership maintenance/regime consolidation. This study contends that the interaction of these three objectives as a complex process that involves

trade-offs and changing priorities is worth pursuing because it provides fundamental insights into a polity's foreign policy and contributes to its understanding.

This chapter proceeds by addressing the last of the above mentioned research questions to provide the rationale for the selection of Syria's foreign policy in its post-colonial period as the subject of this thesis. The section that follows focuses on the theoretical framework of the study and presents the main hypotheses. This introductory chapter concludes with the discussion of the methodology, sources and plan of the study.

1.1. The Theoretical Framework and the Choice of Syria as the Subject of Enquiry

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence and flourishing of foreign policy analysis (FPA)¹ as a vibrant subfield of inquiry under the broader field of International Relations (IR). While FPA is not coterminous with IR, virtually every attempt to explain international relations entails an explanation of foreign policy. It follows that Realism, which has attained a central place in IR after the publication of E. H. Carr's *Twenty Years' Crisis* and Hans J. Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations*, provides its account of foreign policy.² Since its emergence around the middle of the twentieth century Realism has evolved and divided into various related strands. Hence, according to one classification³ we have, 'classical Realism' represented by the works of Morgenthau and Carr; 'neo-Realism' or 'structural Realism' founded by Kenneth Waltz in his seminal *Theory of International Politics*;⁴ and 'neoclassical Realism' pioneered by various leading scholars.⁵ Although key aspects of these (and several other) strands of Realism will be examined in greater detail in the coming parts of this study, the differences between these main strands can be encapsulated in terms of their locus of explanation. While classical Realism tends to locate the root causes of conflict and war in the selfish aspects of human nature ('egoism'), neo-Realism provides a system level structural explanation to account for recurrent patterns of state behaviour and international outcomes. Neoclassical Realism, on the other hand, draws on the

¹ Throughout this study 'foreign policy analysis' and 'the study of foreign policy' will be used interchangeably without implying a difference in meaning.

² Carr, 1991 (first published in 1939); Morgenthau, 1993 (first published in 1948).

³ In another classification Colin Elman suggests four varieties of contemporary Realism: 'rise and fall Realism', 'neoclassical Realism', 'defensive structural Realism', and 'offensive structural Realism'. See Elman, 2007: 11-20.

⁴ Waltz, 1979. For an early review of neo-Realism see the collection of essays in Keohane, 1986. For select post-Cold War restatements see Jervis, 1998; Waltz, 2000; Mearshemier, 1990 and 2001.

⁵ For general overviews see, Rose, 1998; Rathbun, 2008; Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, 2009.

insights of both of its predecessors and emphasises the importance of incorporating domestic politics and ideas as intervening variables into a system level explanation.

Although it has lost substantial ground to its main rivals such as Social Constructivism and Liberalism especially after the failure of its adherents to predict the peaceful end of the Cold War,⁶ Realism, in its various forms and strands, remains as a salient and vigorous approach both to the theory and practice of international relations.⁷ In acknowledgment of its prominence not only in the parent discipline but also in the subfield, Realism has been referred to as the classical or traditional approach to foreign policy analysis.

Notwithstanding its richness and extensive contribution to the theoretical, conceptual and methodological evolution of the field,⁸ Realism tends to discriminate against a great majority of actors in the international system. More specifically, with its emphasis on war fighting capability, projection of power and influence abroad and the self-help principle, the Realist approach directs scholarly attention to those states high up in the international hierarchy of power.⁹ This predisposition to great-power bias was strongest in the immediate post-World War II period. As the objects of analysis and the scope of enquiry were for the most part informed by the tenets of an ascendant Realism, most scholars in that era viewed the world from the perspective of system defining great powers and other industrial states.¹⁰ While the tendency was to concentrate on the strategic dimensions of the burgeoning East-West confrontation and the impact this confrontation was having upon different areas of the world, states other than the great powers and the advanced industrialised states were generally treated as entities to be acted upon and through, and not as independent actors in their own right.

⁶ As Richard Ned Lebow observes, although the peaceful end of the Cold War came as a surprise to nearly everyone, it was the Realists who bore the brunt of the criticism 'because their frameworks discouraged scholars from even acknowledging the possibility of a peaceful end to the conflict'. Lebow, 2007: 243. For a concurring view see Wendt, 1999: 4. On the other hand, William Wohlforth offers a Realist explanation of the peaceful post-1989 system transformation and argues that Realist theories emerged from the Cold War no weaker than they had entered it. See Wohlforth, 1994/1995.

⁷ For recent discussions of the basic principles and the core assumptions of Realism and the distinctive features of its various strands (e.g. classical, structural, defensive, offensive and neoclassical etc.) see, Dunne and Schmidt, 2001; Schweller, 2003; Wohlforth, 2008; Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, 2009.

⁸ See, for example, Gilpin, 1986 and Walt, 1997.

⁹ As one of the leading proponents of Realism explains, 'Realists focus mainly on great powers ... because these powers dominate and shape international politics and they also cause the deadliest wars'. Mearshemier, 2001: 17.

¹⁰ Critical evaluations on this aspect of the international relations literature include Gerges, 1991; Clapham, 1996: 3; Ayoob, 2002: 40; Thomas and Wilkin, 2004; Fawcett, 2005: 6.

Moreover, reflecting the distinction between what Francis Bacon called ‘considerations of plenty’ and ‘considerations of power’, scholarly attention was primarily directed at military and strategic issues whereas issues of economic welfare and social nature were overlooked until their rediscovery following the collapse of the post-war international monetary order in the early 1970s. As confirmed by Kal J. Holsti:¹¹

the textbook literature of international relations of the 1950s and 1960s implicitly or explicitly declared that politics, conceived as the search for security, power, and prestige, were a domain separate from economics, or argued that security was the proper sphere of foreign policy, while the maximization of welfare values was the concern of domestic politics.

This narrow delineation of the subject matter of foreign policy analysis found its expression in the conceptual distinction between ‘high politics’ of military and strategic issues and ‘low politics’ of economic and social welfare issues. The present study makes a case for and provides empirical evidence that reflects the interconnectedness of ‘considerations of plenty’ and ‘considerations of power’; the overlapping of domestic politics and foreign policy; and the contextual nature of the separation of issues of ‘high’ and ‘low’ politics.

On the other hand, while the Cold War developed, the international system was infused with a large number of new states as a result of the decolonisation process. More recently called the states of the ‘global South’ in recognition of the phenomenon of globalisation, these states have variously been categorised as ‘underdeveloped’, ‘less-developed’, ‘developing’, ‘weak’, ‘third world’, ‘non-core’, or ‘periphery’ states.¹² Whatever the label, the primary concerns and problems of these newcomers extended well beyond military and strategic issues to include issues of economic development and dependence, legitimacy, regime survival, identity, and state and nation-building. Yet, since these states possessed few of the capabilities traditionally associated with power politics, their foreign policies were understudied or when studied the inclination was to approach them as rather passive objects of great-power rivalry denying them a purposeful foreign policy of their own.

¹¹ Holsti, 1986: 644.

¹² Macfarlane, 2003: 15-33; Morphet, 2004: 517-537.

In what may be taken as a reflection of the pervasiveness of the traditional approach even among the finest scholars of the global South, Volker Perthes, the author of a study of supreme quality on the political economy of post-1970 Syria, found it notable that any discussion existed about Syria's foreign policies in the 1990s. In his view, 'thirty, even 20 years earlier, there was hardly any foreign policy of Syria's own making to deal with'.¹³ In the same vein, according to Malik Mufti, whose work is commendable as an attempt to link the development of state institutions to the development of foreign policy, it was only after Hafiz al-Asad came to power in 1970 that 'Syria's foreign policy grew more "state-like"... as a strategic arena in which to gain influence and frustrate foes.'¹⁴

Although the international relations and foreign policies of the actors in the global South, including the Middle East, have attracted an increasing amount of attention after the end of the Cold War and the bounds of enquiry have expanded to include a substantial number of neglected issues, a considerable gap still exists with respect to the foreign policies of the states of the global South in their post-colonial epoch. Syria in its immediate post-independence period is a typical example. This study presents Syria as its subject of analysis and adopts a broader conception of foreign policy that does not leave issues of economic and social nature beyond the scope of enquiry.

Thus, a central aim of this study is to examine the development of Syria's foreign policy during the fourteen-year period between the first coup d'état that took place in March 1949 and 8 March 1963 coup that brought the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party to power in Syria. A domestic political economy approach in which socio-economic needs of the country are taken as a source of foreign policy and the acquisition of foreign economic resources as a major foreign policy objective is adopted as a point of departure in this study. Accordingly, an attempt will be made to demonstrate that Syria's low level of infrastructure coupled with its resource gap makes it plausible to identify the acquisition of external resources for economic development as a key foreign policy objective in the

¹³ Perthes, 1995: 5. Yet, the Realist perspective, its modified forms or blends with other approaches have been applied to Syria, especially to its bilateral relations in the post-1970 period. For examples, see Freedman, 1986: 224-250; Efrat, 1991: 241-259; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, 1997; Hinnebusch and Quilliam, 2006; Lawson, 2007; Salloukh, 2009. For examples of more general studies, see Ma'oz (Zeev), 1986: 69-82; Hinnebusch, 1991: 374-409; Quilliam, 1999; Dawn, 2004; Hinnebusch, 2005a; Mohns and Cavatorta, 2010.

¹⁴ Mufti, 1996: 231.

post-independence period. Yet, this study does not suggest that a purely arithmetical cost-benefit analysis lies behind Syrian foreign policy moves. The contention is that economic dimensions have been sufficiently important to warrant investigation. The focus on the poorly endowed nature of the Syrian economy and the consequent quest for external resources should therefore be strictly seen as an artefact of the relative neglect of the resource-securing function of foreign policies of the states of the global South.

The assertion that the quest for foreign economic resources by Syria's rulers' has largely been neglected or undervalued in the analysis of the country's immediate post-independence foreign policy can safely be made in relation to the period that extends until the Ba'th led coup d'état of March 1963. Indeed, the point is best validated by the lack of a single monograph on this dimension of foreign policy for the fourteen-year (1949-1963) period covered by this study.¹⁵ Emphasising the role of the acquisition of external resources for a variety purposes including regime consolidation and state formation, this study aims to enrich of the scholarly literature on Syria and the study of Middle East international relations and foreign policies. It also endeavours to contribute to the closing of the gap between the study of the foreign policies of global South and the global North.

It is highly significant from the point of view of this work that Franklin Weinstein called for studies that demonstrate 'how foreign policy relates to the political and economic problems that constitute the essence of being a less developed country'.¹⁶ In his view, the significance of underdevelopment for the formation of foreign policy is not that it leaves a state at the mercy of stronger powers, but rather that it dictates some of the main concerns of the policy makers.¹⁷ In his own case study on Indonesia, Weinstein discerns three main foreign policy objectives: defence of the nation's independence against perceived threats, mobilisation of the resources of the outside world for the country's economic development and the attainment of a variety of other purposes related to domestic political competition which, for example, included the creation of nationalistic and patriotic symbols that may be used to embarrass adversaries

¹⁵ For the post-1970 period, see Carr, 1980; Stanley, 1990; Clawson, 1989; Lavy and Sheffer, 1991; Lawson, 1994: 47-64. Lawson, 1996a: 102-109.

¹⁶ Weinstein, 1972: 356.

¹⁷ Ibid.: 365.

who fail to accept them.¹⁸ The subsequent emergence of a body of literature that has been aptly called ‘the foreign policy of development’¹⁹ and the listing of ‘acquiring foreign economic resources for development’ as a distinct category under outputs²⁰ are a testimony to the soundness of Weinstein’s line of inquiry which in turn almost inevitably calls for the adoption of a political economy approach in the study of foreign policy. Despite the advent of encouraging works especially in the 1990s,²¹ political economy as an approach in foreign policy analysis remains comparatively underemployed.²² This is more so in the case of Syria. Its rulers’ quests for foreign economic resources to meet the needs of the Syrian economy, a goal also regarded vital for regime maintenance or consolidation, have been largely neglected or undervalued in the analysis of the country’s foreign policy in the immediate post-independence period.

On the other hand, in power based literature of international politics and foreign policy the issue of resources has customarily been viewed as a problem of the arrangement of available resources and their allocation for the attainment of competing goals. More recently, the focus has been on the variation in the ability of states to extract and mobilise resources from their own societies.

For instance, Morgenthau elaborates on the dual problems of ‘balance between resources and policy’ and ‘balance among resources’ in his discussion of the quality of government as an element of ‘national power’ whose other components include geography, natural resources, industrial capacity, military preparedness, population, national character, national morale and the quality of government.²³ Accordingly, good government, which is presented as an independent requirement of national power, has to ‘balance between, on the one hand, the material and human resources that go into the making of national power and, on the other, the foreign policy to be pursued. ... Once a government has brought its foreign policy into balance with the power available to it, it

¹⁸ Ibid.: 356-381.

¹⁹ Dessouki and Korany, 1991: 10. In Egypt where the role of the economic factors in the determination of foreign policy objectives became all apparent as the country experienced a foreign policy restructuring under President Anwar al-Sadat in 1970s, the phrase ‘the economisation of foreign policy’ gained currency. See Sadowski, 1993: 96, note 48.

²⁰ Wurfel and Burton, 1990: 5; Spero and Hart, 2003: 192.

²¹ For examples, see Wurfel and Burton, 1990; Levy and Barnett, 1992; Brand, 1995.

²² Korany, 1990: 32; Light, 1994: 101; Hudson, 2006: 13.

²³ Morgenthau, 1993: 124-163.

must bring different elements of national power into balance with each other.’²⁴ On this basis, the degree of compatibility of resources with policy ends is depicted as a measure of foreign policy performance.²⁵ In this manner policy makers are assigned the role of ‘comparative analysts’ ‘since they have the perpetual task of relating diverse situations one to another and comparing what might be desirable with what is possible in the light of available resources’.²⁶

In Fareed Zakaria’s study that examines the transformation of American foreign policy from non-expansion to expansion in the late nineteenth century, resource extractive capacity of a state is considered as a main component of state strength which in turn is presented as an intervening variable between systemic imperatives and foreign policy. Contending that state structure and strength in relation to its society must be taken into account since they affect the amount of national resources that can be allocated for foreign policy purposes, Zakaria treats the variable of state strength as a continuum measured along four major dimensions: the degree of autonomy from society; the scope of governmental responsibilities; the degree of cohesion in central policy-making apparatus; and the ability to extract material resources. Thus, while strong states are defined as cohesive, autonomous, wealthy and maximal in scope, weak states are characterised as divided, society-penetrated, poor and minimal.²⁷ Gideon Rose, who coined the widely accepted term neoclassical Realism to specifically include Zakaria’s study, aptly conveys the central empirical prediction of this strand of Realism: ‘over the long term the relative amount of material power resources countries possess will shape the magnitude and ambition – the envelope, as it were – of their foreign policies: as their relative power rises states will seek more influence abroad, and as it falls their actions and ambitions will be scaled back accordingly’.²⁸

In a more recent study Jeffrey Taliaferro presents a resource extraction model to explain variation in the types and intensity of internal balancing strategies that threatened states are likely to pursue. Treating states’ external alignments as exogenous and delineating possible internal balancing strategies as ‘emulation’, ‘innovation’, or ‘persistence in

²⁴ Ibid.: 159; For a similar argument see Gilpin, 1981: 241.

²⁵ Morgenthau, 1993: 158-160; Hill, 1977: 1-17; Salmore and Salmore, 1978: 103-122; Smith, 1989.

²⁶ Smith, 1989: 210.

²⁷ Zakaria, 1998: 35-41.

²⁸ Rose, 1998: 152. For a quantitative study that confirms a similar proposition see Clark, Nordstrom and Reed, 2008.

existing strategies', Taliaferro argues that state power, defined as the relative ability of the state to extract and mobilise resources from their societies, shapes the types of internal balancing strategies threatened states are likely to follow. As he explicates, his independent variable is the level of external threat or vulnerability, while variation in the level of state power is the intervening variable. In constructing his model Taliaferro holds the value of the independent variable constant in order to establish the role of state power as an intervening variable between systemic imperatives and the internal balancing strategies treated as the dependent variable. According to this resource extraction model of neoclassical Realism, states that have higher extraction and mobilisation capacity are better able to innovate or emulate the practices of the system's best performing states. On the other hand, states that stand at the opposite end of the spectrum in terms of extraction and mobilisation capacity are expected to experience greater difficulty in pursuing emulation or innovation and therefore are more likely to persist in their existing strategies.²⁹ Thus, all else being equal, states with high state power have a wider range of action and are in a better position to respond to what Kenneth Waltz had earlier called the systemic pressures of competition and socialisation.³⁰

In these power-based studies, the socio-economic resource endowment of a country or a state's capacity to extract societal resources appears as *constraining* or *intervening* variables. Neither is classified as an independent variable capable of explaining behaviour. Clearly, the capacity to extract societal resources for foreign policy purposes varies across different countries and over time. It also conditions the range of internal strategies and therefore has to be taken into account, as Taliaferro argues. Indeed, the range of internal balancing strategies is far more limited for a great majority of developing states which are not only highly constrained by societal forces but also lack the size and sophistication of the economy to effectively engage in emulation or innovation as adaptive strategies. As underscored by Michael Barnett in his study that focuses on the mobilisation of resources for national security in capitalist societies, 'many Third World leaders have professed a desire to achieve independent arms production and increase their autonomy, but their efforts have been frustrated by a lack

²⁹ Taliaferro, 2009.

³⁰ Waltz, 1979: 123-128.

of appropriate technology, an insufficient industrial base, and the ability to achieve the desired economies of scale.’³¹

There is also little doubt that a country’s resource base acts as a constraint on its foreign policy activity. For example, given the ‘perennially anemic state of African economies, resource constraints, and the nagging challenges of development’³² it becomes hardly surprising to be informed that ‘most African countries do not even maintain embassies in all the other states of their sub-region largely because of budgetary constraints’³³ or that Botswana’s thirteen embassies and missions abroad are some of the most ‘skeletonally staffed in the world, with some staffed with only two diplomats’.³⁴

Yet, while the studies reviewed briefly above take the amount of national resources as given and focus on ‘balance between resources and policy’ and ‘balance among resources’ or ‘the variation in the ability of states to extract and mobilise resources from their own societies for security and foreign policy purposes’, this study takes the argument further: it presents a country’s socio-economic needs and political weaknesses as a source of foreign policy. In other words, in line with the political economy approaches to developing countries’ foreign policies, this study takes the socio-economic needs and political problems that constitute the essence of being a less developed country as an *independent* variable that shapes foreign policy goals and preferences. In this respect, this study follows the lead provided by Laurie Brand in her exemplary study that helped bridge the gap between the literature on political economy and security.³⁵

Rather than seeking to understand solely how economic factors may constrain what foreign policies may be pursued, one may also legitimately ask: given a state’s economic structure what sort of foreign policy behaviour may be expected? That is, to what degree are a leadership’s or regime’s estimates of its economic needs and weaknesses a source of foreign policy – the independent variable – rather than mere measures of capabilities to carry out foreign policy constructed on the basis or constrained by other factors?

³¹ Barnett, 1990: 539.

³² Babarinde, 1999: 216.

³³ Ibid.: 216.

³⁴ Zaffiro, 1999: 79-80.

³⁵ Brand, 1995:19.

Seen in this light, when a state is taken as an actor whose foreign policy is to be explained, such an approach incorporates the evolving state-economy/state-society relations and the strategies of domestic political actors. More specifically, it requires an examination of the structure of the economy, its potentials and weaknesses, the nature and extent of foreign trade, the sources of income of the state and distribution of its expenditures.³⁶

Accordingly, in this study economic and social needs are presented as a *source* of Syria's foreign policy in the post-colonial era. An attempt will be made to demonstrate that Syria's low level of 'infrastructure' and its 'resource gap' make it plausible to identify the acquisition of external resources for economic development as a key foreign policy objective. The first of the key terms, infrastructure, is understood beyond its physical forms to include not only roads, harbours and railways, refineries and power plants, irrigation systems but also banking, education and health facilities deemed indispensable for a viable modern state, economy and society.³⁷ The second key term, resource gap, is defined as the idea of a shortfall between a country's earning capacity and the amounts required to meet long-term investment needs and cover the balance of payments deficits.³⁸

However, it is not suggested that a purely arithmetical cost-benefit analysis lies behind Syrian foreign policy moves. The contention is that economic dimensions have been sufficiently important to warrant investigation. The focus on the poorly endowed nature of the Syrian economy and the consequent quest for external resources should therefore be strictly seen as an artefact of the relative neglect of the resource-securing function of the foreign policies of the global South.

Moreover, although this thesis adopts the state as the unit of analysis and attempts an inside-out explanation that integrates the country's political processes and economic structure, the aim is not to substitute a domestic-centred determinism for systemic determinism. From the latter's point of view an inside-out explanation that brings into play the 'uses of foreign policy' may imply too much manipulative intent and

³⁶ Ibid.; Shaw and Nyang'oro, 1999: 245; Luciani, 1990: 65-84; Keohane, 1984: 213.

³⁷ For this conception of infrastructure, see Uphapp and Ilchman, 1972: 86.

³⁸ Waterbury, 1983: 36-37; Mayall, 1990: 118.

capability.³⁹ In this respect, it is readily granted that the structure and the evolution of Syrian political economy are conditioned by the economic and geopolitical structures and processes of the international system. Yet, while imposing constraints, the international system also provides opportunities. It conditions development in the global South but does not preclude it. The variations in development performances within the global South as exhibited by the rise of newly industrialised countries of East Asia which appear to be on the way to bridging the economic gap between themselves and the advanced industrialised countries on the one hand, and the dramatic emergence of poverty-stricken states identified by the World Bank as the 'Heavily Indebted Poor Countries' (HIPC)s⁴⁰ on the other, point to the necessity of taking sub-systemic factors seriously.

This view on development has been informed by 'the new comparative political economy' (NCPE) that emerged as a productive but 'messy' research programme in the 1980s.⁴¹ As conveyed in Peter Evans and John Stephens' authoritative appraisal, work falling in this tradition includes an assortment of studies on Latin America, Asia, Africa and Europe that share a number of vital characteristics despite their methodological eclecticism. While the study of development is basically understood as 'the study of long-term, large scale, socioeconomic and political change',⁴² the NCPE rests on the key conviction that economic and political development cannot be fruitfully investigated in isolation from each other. Significantly, it is indebted to both Marx and Weber but underlines the incompatibility of 'straight jacket theoretical orthodoxy' inherent in the 'capital logic of Marx' and 'value determinist' readings of Weber. Moreover, NCPE has absorbed the lessons that grew out of work on dependency and world system perspective and is therefore sensitive to systemic constraints but rejects models that propose 'necessary' outcomes, maintaining instead that developmental paths are historically contingent.⁴³ Finally, its recognition of historical and social-structurally rooted norms and values as well as its willingness to tolerate explanations that include political and ideational factors along with economic ones are sources of

³⁹ See Hill, 1977: 7; Smith, 1987b: 346; Wurfel and Burton, 1990: 5.

⁴⁰ HIPC refers to forty countries (mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa) with high levels of poverty and debt burden which are eligible for an ongoing debt relief initiative launched jointly by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in 1996. International Development Association and International Monetary Fund, 2011.

⁴¹ Evans and Stephens, 1988: 713-745.

⁴² Ibid.: 737.

⁴³ Ibid.: 725.

strength but leave NCPE vulnerable to contending elegant rivals that propose single-factor explanations.

While adopting a political economy approach as a point of departure, this study recognises that Constructivists focus on normative structures and intangible variables such as identities, values, norms and culture has broadened the contours of enquiry and has added to our theoretical and empirical knowledge. Moreover, as it will be elaborated on in the next chapter, Constructivist students of Middle East politics have successfully demonstrated that trans-state identities (especially pan-Arab and to a lesser extent Islamic) and interests flowing from these identities have to be taken into account in studies that endeavour to understand and explain either the international relations of the region or the foreign policies of its state or non-state actors.

Therefore this study draws on Constructivist insights on the impact of shared identities and acknowledges that post-independence Syria, which prided itself on being the 'beating heart of Arabism' (*qalb al-'uruba al-nabid*), had a shared Arab identity and interests with the other Arab states of the region. These shared interests largely concerned, as Michael Barnett has compellingly articulated, the cause of Palestine, the nature of relations with the West and the search for unity.⁴⁴ Hence Syrian leaders, like their counterparts in other Arab states, had to contend with these issues and be judged accordingly not only by their own public but by the wider Arab public.

In addition, while the focus of the present study is on Syria as a state and the objectives and policies of its political elites, it does not exclude external forces or systemic pressures. As Fawcett notes 'if the former colonial powers were involved in the very creation of [Middle Eastern] states, post-colonial powers have maintained extraordinary high levels of interest in their politics, economics, and security, for reasons that are to do with resources, geographical location, and peoples'.⁴⁵ Moreover, in a region where war has been an ever-present possibility and defence expenditures have been claiming a large portion of total state expenditures, the dynamics of balance of power politics and concerns with security will not be ignored. Indeed, the

⁴⁴ Barnett, 1998.

⁴⁵ Fawcett, 2013: 1.

interconnectedness of *considerations of power* and *considerations of plenty* forms a central argument of this thesis.

On the other hand, while asserting that economic needs of Syria have been a fundamental source of its foreign policy and highlighting the acquisition of foreign resources for economic development as a key foreign policy objective, it is also recognised that the issue at hand is by no means a simple one. In this respect the following points raised by Keith R. Legg and James F. Morrison in their discussion on foreign policy objectives have been found thoroughly relevant: (1) State rulers have multiple objectives and some of these objectives inevitably come into conflict with one another; therefore the resolve to achieve one objective may require the sacrifice of another; (2) The distinction between ends and means is largely analytical. Many of the objectives are rather the means for the attainment of somewhat more distant ends; (3) The implementation of an objective often engenders unintended consequences; (4) Most foreign policy decisions, akin to their counterparts in domestic politics, affect elements of a society in an uneven manner, therefore there is usually a considerable amount of disagreement about the nature of foreign policy; (5) For an objective to be pursued effectively there is the need to muster sufficient support. What constitutes adequate support varies in accordance with the nature of the political regime.⁴⁶

Legg and Morrison's discussion directs us to identify other main objectives of the leaders of a post-colonial state which may overlap as well as clash with the acquisition of resources as a foreign policy objective. Thus, two other major goals, largely corresponding to Weinstein's aforementioned objectives but also confirmed by an elementary literature survey, are going to be considered alongside mobilisation of resources for economic development. These are the goals of independence/autonomy⁴⁷ and leadership maintenance/regime consolidation. Moreover, the following trio of hypotheses on the interaction of these objectives are offered to serve as a basis for this study: (1) If the acquisition of foreign resources for economic development seems to

⁴⁶ Legg and Morrison, 1971: 40-150. For more on multiplicity and diversity of goals see Clapham, 1985: 91-93; Keohane and Nye, 1977/1989: 30 ff; Holsti, 1990: 13-19.

⁴⁷ The goal of independence or autonomy refers to being in a position to follow policies that simply do not reflect the interests of foreign governments or companies beyond the bounds of interdependence. To give an empirical example, a national shipping line, such as the Black Star Line of Ghana, 'was a dramatic symbol of a new state's independence and of its determination to take part in world economy, on its behalf rather than by permission of the leading maritime powers'. See Mayall, 1990: 139.

threaten regime maintenance then the latter will take precedence; (2) If a regime's legitimacy is lagging then the search for compensating resources from foreign state or non-state actors in the form of loans, credits, grants or the like will gain greater urgency; (3) The higher the available amount of foreign resources, the higher the propensity to sacrifice the goal of autonomy. The contention of this study is that the interaction of these objectives as a complex process involving trade-offs and changing priorities is worth pursuing because it provides fundamental insights into a state's foreign policy and contributes to its understanding.

Finally, it follows from the above account that one of the key aims of the present study is to demonstrate that the leaders of post-independence Syria resorted to a diverse set of policy measures and instruments to promote economic development. In this endeavour, which was also designed to sustain their rule and consolidate their regimes, they constructed new institutions and expanded state involvement in the economy. Moreover, this study will also show that, even though not always successful, Syrian elites attempted to acquire external resources to implement their state-building projects. Therefore, this study, with its emphasis on the quest for resources, not only makes a contribution to the study of foreign policy but it also enhances our understanding of the processes of regime consolidation and state formation. The students of Syria, however, are divided in their assessment of the degree of state formation in the post-independence era.

For example, in his eminent undertaking to explain the consolidation of a durable populist authoritarian system of rule after the Ba'ath seized power in March 1963, Steven Heydemann maintains that 'following independence, Syria, like most post-colonial states, experienced tremendous growth in the scope and reach of state institutions'.⁴⁸ Conversely, Mufti asserts that during the praetorian era which corresponded to the period from 1949 to 1970 in Syria, the rulers were simply 'too preoccupied with the struggle for survival to worry about economic and social issues'.⁴⁹

Yet, while displaying a tendency to overlook the efforts of post-independence rulers at state-building and their considerable success in laying the groundwork for expanding

⁴⁸ Heydemann, 1999: 59. Moreover, Heydemann forcefully argues that various factions of the Ba'ath pursued a rather consistent strategy of state building from 1963 to 1970 and succeeded in their enterprise within the span of those seven years.

⁴⁹ Mufti, 1996: 256.

and diversifying the resource base of the state, Mufti highlights the positive role of resource mobilisation and implementation of development programmes for regime consolidation and state formation.⁵⁰

Praetorianism finally came to an end with the rise to power of Hafez al-Assad and Saddam Hussein, leaders who possessed the skill and ruthlessness necessary to establish a workable mix of despotic and infrastructural state power so that the sword of the security services could be made an obedient tool of central authority. It was their good fortune, moreover, to gain control of Syria and Iraq just as oil revenues were about to reach levels sufficient to grant both governments an unprecedented degree of financial autonomy from foreign and domestic actors alike. With such resources, Assad and Saddam set about securing their hold on power by strengthening the institutions of the state (thereby enhancing its efficacy) and using them to implement wide-ranging socioeconomic development programmes (thereby promoting its popular legitimacy). In this way, regime consolidation and state formation went hand in hand in Syria and Iraq.

The significant theoretical and methodological point for our discussion is that if economic resources can help bring about such a transformation, would it be wrong to expect ruling elites to explore available foreign policy options for economic resource mobilisation and act upon them if such options are realisable? In other words, could financial imperatives/economic needs shape foreign policy? Could the adoption of a political economy approach contribute to a better understanding of the foreign policy phenomena? This study contends that the answer to these questions is affirmative and aspires to show that acquiring foreign resources to foster economic development was an ongoing foreign policy objective of the regimes that ruled Syria during the post-colonial period covered by this thesis.

1.2. Methodology, Sources and Plan of the Study

Foreign policy analysis in a comparative manner can be undertaken in a variety of ways. These include cross-unit comparison (i.e. comparisons of multiple units at a single point in time) and longitudinal comparison (i.e. the comparison of a single unit with itself across intervals over a period of time).⁵¹ Taking into account that a comparative approach increases the comprehension of a single actor, this study aims to examine Syria's post-colonial foreign policy longitudinally. Thus, the next four chapters examine four eras of foreign policy beginning at the first coup d'état that took place in March

⁵⁰ Ibid.: 257.

⁵¹ East, Salmore, Hermann, 1978: 12-13.

1949 and ending with the coup that brought the Ba'ath Party to power in Syria on 8 March 1963.

This research is based on both secondary literature on Syria and, as much as possible, on primary resources that were partly obtained during a ten-month field study in Damascus in 1996-1997. Given the inaccessibility of official archival documents in Syria, the material referred to here as primary sources include the *Summary of World Broadcasts for the Middle East and Africa* published by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC/SWB), statistics largely obtained from Syria's Central Bureau of Statistics, texts of economic co-operation agreements whenever available, development plans as released by relevant ministries or government agencies and a number of (auto)biographies and writings by some of the leading personalities of the period.

Clearly, access to archival material would have not only been beneficial in carrying out the present study but it would also have enhanced its quality. Yet, as Brand alludes, students of the global South often have to work under the assumption that such material will never be released, or may never have existed in the first place.⁵² Apart from the limitations imposed by the lack of access to archival material it is necessary to point out the quality of available data. In this respect, many scholars of Syria have rightfully cautioned that the statistics released by public or private bodies are incomplete, inconsistent and often inaccurate.⁵³ Examples of critical but missing statistics include data on income distribution and wealth or figures on arms acquisition and military assistance. In addition, the fact that the available fiscal data are for the budget, which consists of estimates rather than the actual revenues and expenditures, further complicates matters.

Nonetheless, while the problematic of lacking accurate data shall be registered, it should not be an excuse to avoid the study of major areas of the world. Therefore, when the ideal data is beyond reach one should work with what is available and not be deterred from making a contribution however slight that may be. Finally, in light of above qualifications the data compiled for this study, though handled with utmost care, should be taken as indicators that reflect trends and not exact magnitudes.

⁵² Brand, 1995: 8.

⁵³ See e.g. Kanovsky, 1977: 4-6; Clawson, 1989: 49-57; Perthes, 1995: 13-14, Haddad, 2002: 84-87.

The outline of the thesis is as follows. Chapter Two presents an explorative review in a way that clarifies, through an engagement with prominent approaches and relevant works, this study's conceptualisation of foreign policy, its view about the legitimate actors and the scope of the subject matter of FPA. Attention then turns more specifically to the state of the foreign policies of the global South and to the sources of dissatisfaction especially during the Cold War years. The chapter ends with a review of representative works of contending approaches to Middle East international relations and foreign policies in a way that highlights both the emerging theoretical diversity and the rationale for adopting a political economy approach for this study. This final section also includes a review of the related studies on post-independence Syria.

Chapter Three starts with a brief account of the legacy of the colonial period in a way that establishes Syria's credentials as state of the global South and then examines the rule of Husni al-Za'im who deposed President Quwwatli and the parliamentary government in a coup d'état on 30 March 1949. The examination of the reactions to the coup at the local, regional and international levels and Za'im's efforts to obtain recognition from the international community is followed by a focus on a series of critical agreements concluded or proposed in order to enlist foreign backing and mobilise external resources to foster economic development as part of Za'im's failed drive to consolidate his regime.

The period from the deposition of Za'im in August 1949 to the re-establishment of the parliamentary regime in March 1954 is the subject of Chapter Four. Although marked by a series of military coups and a multitude of short-lived governments, this period witnessed great strides in both agriculture and industry which in turn stimulated other sectors such as commerce, construction and transport. Set against this background, the chapter traces the role of the state in this rapid expansion and argues that despite the impressive economic growth and the accompanying augmentation in Syria's resource base, the Syrian economy continued to be inflicted by structural weaknesses. Moreover, it undertakes to demonstrate that while the People's Party which became the dominate political force in the aftermath of Za'im's downfall was inclined to sacrifice Syria's independence and support unity with Iraq as a solution to this vital problem, the subsequent regimes that were moulded by Adib al-Shishakli sought to procure foreign

financial aid and technical assistance in order to achieve a breakthrough in economic development.

The four-year period from the ouster of Shishakli until the formal approval of the union of Syria and Egypt in February 1958 is the subject of Chapter Five. It discusses the main political and socio-economic developments that brought Syria's ruling elites very close to the initiation of a great majority of planned development projects and then concentrates on the unravelling of events at the end of which Syria voluntarily ceded its sovereignty and independence by merging with President Nasser's Egypt.

Since President Nasser established himself as the ultimate policy-maker and Cairo became the real centre of all policy-making for the entire union, the discussion of the union period is limited to a review of the focal themes including socio-economic reforms, performance of the economy, development plans and the question of funds for their implementation. Thus, Chapter Six starts with a review of the union period as a prelude to the discussion of the Separatist regime that prevailed in Syria from September 1961 to March 1963. Then the focus shifts to the efforts to shore up the international standing of the regime, the motives behind the policy of *rapprochement* with the neighbouring Arab states and the downfall of the Separatist regime despite the attainment of the greatest degree of diversification in terms of both credit suppliers and trade partners.

The recapitulation of the main themes of this study is undertaken in the concluding chapter which presents a comparative analysis of the interplay of key foreign policy objectives that have been formulated as (i) the goal of the acquisition of foreign economic resources to foster economic development, (ii) the goal of independence/autonomy, and (iii) the goal of leadership maintenance/regime consolidation.

CHAPTER TWO

Foreign Policy Analysis, the Global South, and the Middle East An Explorative Review

2.1. Introduction

Since the emergence of ground-breaking works in the 1950s and 1960s, Foreign Policy Analysis has been established as an evolving and vibrant subfield of International Relations. However, during its evolution the subfield also suffered from particular weaknesses and exhibited some noteworthy limitations. The theoretical underdevelopment and shortfall of global South foreign policies, especially during the Cold War years, are among the most significant of these drawbacks. As expressed by Holsti in his evaluation of the state of the field during the Cold War, ‘from comparative foreign policy, through security studies, to international relations theory generally, the developing countries were left out as theoretical or ontological agents. ... Countries in the peripheries were portrayed primarily as arenas of great power competition’.¹ On the other hand pioneering works existed² and studies that alluded to a remarkable progress were published in the years bordering the end of the Cold War.³ The subsequent shift from a bipolar world, the spread of micro-nationalisms, the rise of religious extremism, the events of 9/11 and the US ‘War on Terror’ as well as the ongoing processes of globalisation have all animated theoretical debates and helped generate a burgeoning literature. The publication of seven major theoretically informed works on Middle East international relations and foreign policies in the five-year period between 2001-2005 alone can be taken as a reflection of the growing attention paid to the global South. These are Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami’s *The Foreign Policies of Middle Eastern States*, Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett’s *Identity and Foreign Policy*, Hinnebusch’s *The International Politics of the Middle East*, Carl Brown’s *Diplomacy in the Middle East*, Fred Halliday’s *The Middle East in International Relations*, Gerd Nonneman’s *Analyzing Middle East and the Relationship with Europe*,

¹ Holsti, 1998: 38.

² See, e.g., Weinstein, 1972; Migdal, 1974; Clapham and Wallace (eds.), 1977; McLaurin, Mughisuddin and Wagner (eds.), 1977.

³ See, e.g., Sa’d al-Din et al., 1985; Korany (ed.), 1986; Scalapino et al. (eds.), 1988; Wurfel and Burton (eds.), 1990; Korany and Dessouki (eds.), 1991.

and Louise Fawcett's *International Relations of the Middle East*.⁴ As we shall see within the course of this chapter, these studies adopt a variety of perspectives ranging from refinements or modified forms of Realism to historical and international sociology to Constructivism.

While a progressive bridging of the gap between Middle East Studies and IR⁵ can be taken as part of a broader trend towards closing the gap between the study of foreign policies of the global South and the global North, a general dissatisfaction with the state of the art of FPA is still notable among the students of the former. As it will be subsequently shown, students of the global South have not ceased to critique traditional IR and FPA theoretical literature for looking at the world from the viewpoint of its most powerful or developed states or to emphasise the need for more studies that reflect the perspectives and the characteristics of their less developed counterparts.

Therefore, an explorative review addressing the contentious points and weaknesses of FPA follows this introduction. This review is undertaken in a way that clarifies, through an engagement with prominent approaches and relevant works, this study's conceptualisation of foreign policy, its view about the legitimate actors and the scope of the subject matter of FPA. Attention then turns more specifically to the state of the foreign policies of the global South and to the sources of dissatisfaction alluded above. Moreover, since the phrase 'Third World' is among the labels used interchangeably with global South in this study, a discussion of the debates surrounding its meaning and utility is undertaken and a justification of its employment as an analytical category is given. This chapter ends with a review of representative works of contending approaches to Middle East international relations and foreign policies in a way that highlights both the emerging theoretical diversity and the rationale for adopting a political economy approach for this study. This final section also includes a review of the related studies on post-independence Syria.

⁴ Hinnebusch and Ehteshami (eds.), 2002; Telhami and Barnett (eds.), 2002; Hinnebusch, 2003a; Brown (eds.), 2004 (first published in 2001); Halliday, 2005; Nonneman (ed.), 2005; Fawcett (ed.), 2013 (first published in 2005).

⁵ As Valbjørn underlines in his review essay, whether these attempts at bridging the gap indicate a permanent 'transformation' or 'a transient desert bloom' remains to be seen. Valbjørn, 2003. See also Teti, 2007 and Sasley, 2011.

2.2. Foreign Policy Analysis: An Explorative Review

A theory provides a systematic view of a phenomenon by presenting a series of propositions or hypotheses in order to understand or explain.⁶ It helps determine what phenomena are important and assists in sorting out the appealing and answerable questions from the rest. One of the aims of FPA is to conceptualise and theorise the ‘foreign policy’ phenomena and to develop methods that will contribute to better understanding of the subject matter.

Acknowledging the importance of theory, leading scholars have made serious attempts since the early 1950s to form a theory or framework for foreign policy analysis. For example, in their pioneering work Richard Snyder and his associates applied decision-making theory to foreign policy analysis and thereby initiated what became called the ‘scientific’ or ‘comparative foreign policy’ movement.⁷ Following this tradition Brecher and his associates provided a more complex model to ‘explore state behaviour in depth and breadth’.⁸ James Rosenau advanced a pre-theory that ‘provides a basis for comparison in the examination of the external behaviour of various countries in various situations’⁹ while Graham Allison enriched the field by offering *Organisational Process* and *Bureaucratic Politics* models as alternatives to the *Rational Actor* model and demonstrated that through their application one can arrive at three different interpretations of the same event.¹⁰ Subsequently, highlighting the registered progress and utilising Thomas Kuhn’s concept of ‘normal science’,¹¹ Rosenau announced the emergence of the study of foreign policy as a *normal* science by the mid-1970s.¹²

Without delving into the ‘Great Debate’ of the 1960s between the ‘traditionalists’ and the ‘behaviouralists’ who largely differed on the methodological question of whether human behaviour is amenable to scientific enquiry as applied in the natural sciences,¹³ it

⁶ Knutsen, 1992: 1.

⁷ Snyder, Bruck and Sapin, 1954.

⁸ Brecher, Steinberg and Stein, 1969: 75-101.

⁹ Rosenau, [first published in] 1966/1980: 115-169.

¹⁰ Allison, 1969: 689-718.

¹¹ Rosenau states that Kuhn’s formulation of a normal science allows for a field to be said to have emerged when the degree of methodological and philosophical consensus among researchers is such that their contributions are merely elaborations and refinements of each other’s work. For Kuhn’s original formulation of ‘normal science’, see Kuhn, 1970: 24.

¹² Rosenau (ed.), 1976: 370.

¹³ For what has been called the second or the new ‘great debate’ following the first ‘great debate’ between Idealism and Realism that took place in the interwar period, see e.g. Hollis and Smith, 1991: 28-32; Little, 1991: 463-478; Brown, 1997:35-37.

can safely be argued that the diversity of the research on personal characteristics and cognition, perception-misperception, analogy, ideas and ideology, decision-making processes, international bargaining and conflict, nationalism, religion, gender, revolution, peace research, participation, legitimacy, human rights, health, nature of the regime and of the state, foreign economic policies¹⁴ and other related topics which contribute to the study of foreign policy indicates the existence and vitality of an integrative subfield under the more comprehensive field of International Relations. As underscored by Juliet Kaarbo, current research in FPA is ‘vibrant and multidimensional; it bridges gaps with adjacent disciplines, the policy-making community, and the larger field of international relations’.¹⁵

But the contentious points as well as the weaknesses of this subfield are also considerable and explored. This explorative review is undertaken with a particular focus on the conceptualisation of foreign policy as the explanandum of foreign policy analysis, the legitimate actors of the subfield and the delineation of its subject matter.

2.2.1. The Explanandum of Foreign Policy Analysis

Foreign policy as a concept refers to the explanandum - the phenomenon that is to be explained- of foreign policy analysis. It is also referred to as the dependent variable.¹⁶ As alluded to by Korany and Dessouki an important prior task in any explanation of an actor’s foreign policy requires a precise definition of the dependent variable.¹⁷ Among the criticisms that come to the surface during assessments on the state of FPA is the contention that the concept ‘foreign policy’ is either left undefined or defined in different ways thus inhibiting theory-building. In the words of Don Munton, ‘the disturbing but nonetheless accurate conclusion to be drawn from the contemporary literature is that students of foreign policy do not have even a reasonably clear or generally agreed-upon notion of the very concept ‘foreign policy’.¹⁸ A decade and a half after Munton’s essay appeared, Holsti pointed out the persistence of the same problem:

¹⁴ For each one of these themes, see e.g. Dyson, 2006; Holsti, 1976: 120-144; Jervis, 1976; Brunk, 2008; Goldstein and Keohane (eds.), 1993; Carlsnaes, 1986; Brecher, 1980; Evans, Jacobson and Putnam (eds.), 1993; Wilkenfeld (ed.), 1973; Zahariadis, 1994: 647-668; Hurd, 2007; Enloe, 2004: esp. 122-130; Halliday, 1989; Galtung, 1969: 167-191; Alger, 1977: 277-293; Dawisha, 1990: 284-299; Donnelly, 1982: 574-595; McInnes and Lee, 2006; Salmore and Salmore, 1978: 103-123; Luciani, 1990: 284-299; (M.) Smith, 2004a: 75-90.

¹⁵ Kaarbo, 2003: 156.

¹⁶ Carlsnaes, 2008: 99.

¹⁷ Korany and Dessouki, 2008: 27.

¹⁸ Munton, 1976: 258.

‘our field lacks a carefully delineated dependent variable’.¹⁹ Similarly, in their subsequent review of the field of the FPA, Valerie Hudson and Christopher Vore called for ‘the refinement of the dependent variable: foreign policy’.²⁰

A brief survey of literature gives credence to these observations. Thus, Rosenau, who characterises the foreign policy phenomena as ‘the unwanted stepchildren’ of international politics and comparative politics,²¹ does not provide a strict definition but explains that such phenomena ‘involve governmental undertakings directed toward the external environment’ or ‘stated most succinctly ... are those that reflect an association between variations in the behaviour of national actors and variations in their external environments’.²² Baghat Korany, while criticising those scholars who equated a country’s foreign policy solely with its foreign policy decisions, maintains that a country’s foreign policy is ‘a continuous, wider phenomenon, embracing general objectives, stated strategy, and a series of routine actions: trade exchanges, cultural encounters, exchanges of diplomatic notes’.²³ Another far-reaching definition is provided by Charles Kegley and Eugene Wittkopf who state that foreign policy and the decision routines that produce it refer to ‘the goals that the officials representing states seek to obtain abroad, the values that give rise to those objectives, and the means or instruments through which they are pursued’.²⁴ Moreover, Brian White draws attention to the problems surrounding the constituting terms ‘foreign’ and ‘policy’ themselves after offering a definition of foreign policy as ‘that area of governmental activity which is concerned with relationships between the state and other actors, particularly other states, in the international system’.²⁵ Finally, Carolyn Warner and Stephen Walker define foreign policy as the ‘formal policies of a state which affect various military, economic, humanitarian, social, and cultural dimensions of its relations with other states and non-state actors’.²⁶

On the basis of our sample of definitions or elaborations it appears that recognising the problems associated with the constituent terms ‘foreign’ and ‘policy’ can be a step

¹⁹ Holsti, 1990: 10.

²⁰ Hudson and Vore, 1995: 229.

²¹ Rosenau, 1980: 125, note 39.

²² Rosenau, 1968/1980: 88-89.

²³ Korany, 1986: 39.

²⁴ Kegley and Wittkopf, 1989: 37.

²⁵ White, 1989: 1-26.

²⁶ Warner and Walker, 2011: 114.

forward towards enhancing our understanding of the explanandum of foreign policy analysis as well as its precise conceptualisation to guide the present study. Thus, can we clearly distinguish ‘foreign’ from ‘domestic’ policy? In this respect, what are the insights that can be drawn from existing approaches and studies?

In such an endeavour, one available option is to rely on the conventional dichotomy between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ environments. In this way state frontiers are treated as conceptual as well as territorial boundaries and ‘foreign’ and ‘domestic’ policy is separated accordingly, while the state is viewed as ‘the gatekeeper between intrasocietal and extrasocietal flows of action’.²⁷ But the permeability of states to ideas, peoples and developments associated with other states or trans-border groups, movements and organisations blurs the distinction between the internal and external environments.

Although classical Realism rests on a neat distinction between domestic and foreign affairs or internal and external environments,²⁸ one of its principal formulators Hans Morgenthau has recognised the possibility of such a breakdown. The following is his portrayal of such an instance:²⁹

An underdeveloped nation that could increase in a spectacular fashion the health, literacy, and the standard of living of its people would thereby have achieved a considerable increase in its power in other underdeveloped regions of the world. At this point ... the traditional distinction between foreign and domestic policies tends to breakdown. One might almost be tempted to say that there are no longer any purely domestic affairs, for whatever a nation does or does not do is held for or against it as a reflection of its political philosophy, system of government, and way of life.

Moreover, with its emphasis on anarchy as the principal organising principle of the international system and hierarchy as that of domestic political systems, neo-Realism rests on a sharp distinction between internal and external affairs.³⁰ Accordingly, while the international realm is distinguished by the lack of an overarching central authority, political actors stand in relationships of authority and subordination in domestic

²⁷ Nettle, 1968: 564.

²⁸ See Holsti, 1985: 136; David, 1991: 242; Vasquez, 1997: 899; Dunne and Schmidt, 2001: 143; Brown, 2012: 859.

²⁹ Morgenthau, 1993: 165.

³⁰ The seminal example of neo-Realism is Waltz, 1979. For an early review of neo-Realism see the collection of essays in Keohane, 1986. For select post-Cold War restatements see Jervis, 1998; Waltz, 2000; Mearshemier, 1990 and 2001.

politics.³¹ In this view which ‘privileges the autonomous nature of the anarchic international system and focuses on the pressures that it places on every nation-state’, the foreign policies of states are best explained ‘as a rational response to these external pressures’.³² However, Barry Buzan, who has profoundly contributed to neo-Realist scholarship, acknowledges that the distinction between internal and external affairs may not hold in some cases. In his discussion of the relationship between individual and national security for example, Buzan points out that citizens of a state could act or be accused of acting as a fifth column in support of some other state. He adds that ‘where this happens, neat distinctions between citizens and foreigners, state and government, and domestic and international policy, begin to breakdown’.³³

Although neo-Realism as espoused by Waltz privileges systemic imperatives and plays down the significance of unit-level variables, the proponents of neoclassical Realism endeavour to integrate domestic politics, norms and ideas into their analyses to explain foreign policy behaviour of states. More precisely, drawing upon neo-Realism they emphasise the importance of the anarchic international environment and suggest that ‘international systemic pressures are the most important cause behind the foreign policy behaviour of particular states, but only through the mediating effect of unit-level variables’.³⁴ Hence they retain the traditional distinction between internal and external environments but they strive to bridge the gap between the two in their analyses. Their sub-systemic variables include domestic coalition making and ideological myth-making, state power, political influence of interest groups, domestic politics of national identity, elite perceptions, and internal extraction capacity.³⁵

³¹ See Waltz, 1979: 88-97.

³² Kapstein, 1995: 754.

³³ Buzan, 1991: 53. Subsequently Buzan joined forces with Charles Jones and Richard Little to advance their brand of structural Realism. Thus while Waltz assumes that agents of states operate under no domestic structural constraints, they argue that state agents have to respond to the constraints imposed by both internal and external structures. They also promote ‘interaction capacity’ as a third level of analysis between structural and unit levels of analysis to better account for transformation and continuity in the international system. See Buzan, Jones and Little, 1993.

³⁴ Dueck, 2009: 141. For general overviews see, Rose, 1998; Rathbun, 2008; Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, 2009.

³⁵ See, for example, Snyder, 1991; Zakaria, 1998; Mearshemier and Walt, 2007; Sterling-Folker, 2009; Taliaferro, 2009. Note that Mearshemier, one the most prominent advocates of offensive Realism, has co-authored a study with Stephen Walt (Mearshemier and Walt, 2007) that has been classified as a neoclassical work.

In short, while almost all upholders of different types of Realism tend to base their works on a neat dichotomy between internal and external affairs or environments, some depart from the rest by conceding the possibility of a breakdown of the assumed distinction at least in some cases and others endeavour to integrate the two environments in their explanations.

Conversely, either the erosion of the distinction, or the notion of non-distinction, is at the centre of neo-Liberalism³⁶ and (neo-Marxist) Structuralism, the other two Cold War era mainstream approaches to the study of international relations. Thus, while neo-Liberalism makes its case for the erosion of the distinction from the point of view of the advanced capitalist states by pointing towards their increasing 'interdependence', Structuralism rejects the distinction from the perspective of the less-developed countries by pointing to the mechanisms that perpetuate their 'underdevelopment' or 'dependent development'.

For example, in the 'complex interdependence' model developed by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, the existence of multiple channels of formal and informal contacts among societies, the absence of hierarchy among issues of a military and non-military nature, and the diminishing salience of force as an instrument of policy among industrialised pluralist countries lead to the breakdown of the distinction between domestic and international politics. As the authors who are considered the founding fathers of neo-Liberalism succinctly put it: 'as the complexity of actors and issues in world politics increases, the utility of force declines and the line between domestic policy and foreign policy become blurred'.³⁷

Neo-Marxist Structural arguments, however, flow from key assumptions concerning the unequal nature of exchange in the global economy and consequent division of the world

³⁶ As Steve Smith maintains labels of approaches are essentially problematic and different scholars have used separate labels to refer to the same approach while some scholars or strands of thought sit uneasily between these approaches. See Smith, 1995: 18. Thus Realism has also been called the politics of power and security or state-centric politics while its neo-Realist strand has also been called structural Realism; Liberalism has also been called cobweb or mixed actor model or Pluralism /Globalism or Global Society/Transactionalism or politics of interdependence and transnational relations; and the last of the triad (neo-Marxist) Structuralism has been also called Neo-Marxism/Internationalism or the politics of dominance and dependence or the relations of centre and periphery or layer-cake model.

³⁷ Keohane and Nye, 1977/1989: 24-35. (Quotation is from p. 32).

into centre (core) and periphery.³⁸ Since the world capitalist system embodies structural domination of the core and the dependence of the periphery, it is contended that the balance of benefits from international processes of exchange is biased towards the centre. It is also argued that the structures of domination and dependence produce political and economic elites whose interests are in harmony with those of multinational corporations and core country ruling classes. The latter, however, are not seen as external to the periphery but intrinsic to the world capitalist system. As elaborated by Osvaldo Sunkel:³⁹

Foreign factors are seen not as external but as intrinsic to the system, with manifold and sometimes hidden or subtle political, financial, economic, technical and cultural effects inside the underdeveloped country. These contribute significantly to shaping the nature and operation of the economy, society and polity, a kind of ‘fifth column’ as it were.

Moreover, one key feature of the contemporary literature on ‘Empire’, which has been animated by Structural thinking, is its inclination to analyse the social world as a totality and its reliance on unbounded frontiers. For instance, in one of the landmarks of this literature, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri present the notion of ‘Empire’ as a new form of sovereignty and argue that this ‘new logic and structure of rule’ has emerged along with the globalisation of economic and cultural exchanges. Accordingly, in contrast to ‘imperialism’ which they see as an extension of the sovereignty of European powers beyond their own borders, ‘Empire’ refers to ‘a *decentralised* and *detritorializing* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers’.⁴⁰ As Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey observe in their critical review, *Empire* offers ‘a “total” analysis of world politics past and present. Core and periphery, North and South, East and West, inside and outside are treated as part of a single, increasingly global formation, structured and produced by imperial relations of diverse kinds’.⁴¹

³⁸ See, for example, Galtung, 1971 and Wallerstein, 1974. For post-Cold War appraisals see Topik, 1998; Kelly, 2008. Note that Immanuel Wallerstein posits ‘the semi-periphery’ as a third structural position which is required to make a capitalist world-economy run smoothly.

³⁹ Sunkel, 1972: 519.

⁴⁰ Hardt and Negri, 2000: xi-xii, emphasis in original.

⁴¹ Barkawi and Laffey, 2002: 116.

On the other hand the epistemological, methodological, ontological and normative assumptions of the mainstream theories have been challenged in varying degrees by different approaches that have risen to prominence since the 1980s.⁴²

Of these, Constructivism has become one of the major schools of thought within IR.⁴³ While Nicholas Onuf has coined the term ‘constructivism’ to describe theories that emphasise the socially constructed nature of international relations,⁴⁴ Alexander Wendt’s writings are generally accepted as the most influential formative contribution. In Wendt’s view, the social construction of international politics is an analysis of ‘how processes of interaction produce and reproduce the social structures – cooperative or conflictual – that shape actors’ identities and interests and the significance of their material contexts’.⁴⁵ As Wendt maintains in his central work *Social Theory of International Politics*, the two basic tenets of Constructivism are ‘(1) that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature’.⁴⁶ The Constructivists emphasise the importance of normative and ideational structures because these are thought to shape the social identities of social and political actors and influence their actions. Whereas neo-Realists define the structure of the international system as the distribution of material capabilities of states under anarchy, and the Marxists stress the material structure of the capitalist world economy, Constructivists attribute structural characteristics to shared ideas, beliefs and values. In the words of Wendt, they envisage the structure of the international system ‘as a distribution of ideas because they have an idealist ontology’.⁴⁷

Despite having ontological differences, Wendt shares some key premises of Waltzian neo-Realism such as the existence of anarchy and the centrality of states in the

⁴² Again several categories are offered. While the three mainstream schools of thought are placed in the categories of rationalistic accounts or explanatory or materialist theories, the challenges are categorised as constitutive theories or reflective accounts. In this view, the main difference is between those approaches that offer explanations of ‘reality’ and those that see theory as constitutive of that ‘reality’. See Smith, 1995: 24-30.

⁴³ Walt, 1998; Snyder, 2004.

⁴⁴ Kubáľková, Onuf and Kowert, 1998: 4.

⁴⁵ Wendt, 1995: 81.

⁴⁶ Wendt, 1999: 1. For review of Wendt’s centrepiece see the collection of essays in Guzzini and Leander, 2006.

⁴⁷ Wendt, 1999: 5. Illustrating the diversity within schools of thought in IR, Onuf asks Constructivists to drop the word ‘structure’ from their vocabulary and proposes ‘social arrangement’ instead. See Onuf, 1998: 63.

international system. However, Wendt portrays anarchy in cultural rather than materialist terms as he upholds that anarchy is socially constructed among states: ‘anarchy is what states make of it’.⁴⁸ In addition, Wendt argues that there have been three ideal type cultures of anarchy: Hobbesian, in which states view each other as enemies; Lockean, which is characterised by rivalry; and Kantian, in which states consider each other as friends.⁴⁹ One common feature of these cultures is that they are all constituted by structures of shared knowledge. Moreover, in his attempt to develop a systemic theory, Wendt focuses on the interactions between states in the international system. In this endeavour, he adopts the state as the primary unit of analysis and brackets the unit level processes. Wendt justifies his ‘states systemic project’ on the grounds that ‘since states are the dominant form of subjectivity in contemporary world politics this means that they should be the primary unit of analysis for thinking about the global regulation of violence’.⁵⁰ Therefore, according to Wendt, ‘the possibility of systems theory of whatever kind, assumes that the domestic or unit level and the systemic levels of analysis can be separated’.⁵¹

It must be added that whilst Wendt can be taken as a leading representative of Constructivism’s systemic variant since he adopts the traditional distinction between internal and external environments and lays emphasis on the latter, a holistic strand approaches these realms as two faces of a single global order and investigates the mutually constitutive relationship between this order and the state. As Price and Reus-Smit explain, while the existence of domestic and international realms is not denied, the division is rather seen ‘as a unique historical construct, the chief consequence and characteristic of a distinctly modern political order built around territorial sovereign states’.⁵²

Whereas adherents of Constructivism tend to uphold the assumed distinction between internal and external environments, other reflective accounts generally argue against maintaining such a distinction. In a nutshell, these include critical theory whose

⁴⁸ Wendt, 1992.

⁴⁹ Wendt, 1999: 258.

⁵⁰ Ibid.: 9.

⁵¹ Ibid.: 13.

⁵² Price and Reus-Smit, 1998: 269.

commitment to emancipation transcends territorial boundaries,⁵³ postmodernism which rejects the traditional distinction ‘from the vantage point of the marginalised, the silenced, the omitted, those whose lives, cultures, and histories have for so long been read out of the power politics narrative’;⁵⁴ and feminist approaches that expose the gender blindness of IR and attempt to reveal its biases irrespective of any ‘established’ boundaries.⁵⁵ Feminism’s objection to the traditional domestic-international distinction as a basis to establish disciplinary boundaries is unambiguously expressed by Jacqui True: ‘For feminist analysts, the independence of domestic politics from international politics and the separation of public from private spheres cannot be the basis for a disciplinary boundary, since anarchy outside typically supports gender hierarchy at home and vice versa.’⁵⁶

Besides, the ‘ambiguity’ or ‘obfuscation’ or ‘worldwide blurring’ of the foreign-domestic distinction is a recurrent theme in the writings of Rosenau, one of the most ingenious and prolific contributors to the study of foreign policy and international relations. His attempts to give conceptual and theoretical expression to the theme is all apparent in his formulation of the ‘penetrated political system’;⁵⁷ in his portrayal of foreign policy as an ‘issue area’;⁵⁸ in his work on ‘linkage politics’;⁵⁹ and finally in his offering of ‘bifurcationism’ as an alternative paradigm.⁶⁰

Additionally, the traditional distinction between international and domestic politics has been challenged from the comparativist’s perspective by Peter Gourevitch in a stimulating article which paved the way for the emergence of a ‘second-image-reversed’⁶¹ approach.⁶² Although in the essay he focuses on the international causes of

⁵³ See, e.g., Cox, 1981: 126-155 and Linklater, 1992: 77-98. For subsequent appraisals see Rengger and Thirkell-White, 2007; Kratochwil, 2007.

⁵⁴ George, 1994: 212. Alison Watson’s study which argues for the inclusion of children as a ‘site of knowledge’ to better understand the international system and Anne McNewin’s work on the links between the contestation of boundaries of the ‘political’ by irregular migrants and the transformations in political belonging are particular examples that take the previously omitted or marginalised as their subjects of analysis. See Watson, 2006; McNevin, 2007.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Zalewski and Enloe, 1995: 279-305 and Tickner, 2005: 2173-2188.

⁵⁶ True, 2005: 223.

⁵⁷ Rosenau, 1966/1980: 140.

⁵⁸ Rosenau, 1967/1980: 461-500.

⁵⁹ Rosenau, 1969/1980: 370-401.

⁶⁰ Rosenau, 1990.

⁶¹ The original distinction between the ‘first image’ (i.e. the nature and behaviour of man), the ‘second image’ (i.e. the nature of the state and domestic society), and the ‘third image’ (i.e. the nature of the international system of states) is made in Waltz, 1959.

domestic structures and regimes, Gourevitch's broader argument rests on the 'hopelessly interpenetration' of foreign and domestic politics. As he succinctly put it:⁶³

The international system is not only a consequence of domestic politics and structures but a cause of them. Economic relations and military pressures constrain an entire range of domestic behaviours, from policy decisions to political forms. International relations and domestic politics are therefore so interrelated that they should be analysed simultaneously, as wholes.

A decade after Gourevitch's article, Robert Putnam pointed out the limitations of the existing literature in accounting for what he described as the puzzling entanglements of domestic and international politics. So he proposed a conceptual framework that provides for the simultaneous treatment of international and domestic factors at least in international bargaining situations which require the conclusion of an agreement and its subsequent ratification. In Putnam's 'two-level games' model, central decision makers appear in two tables, one representing domestic politics and the other international negotiations. The novelty, despite the metaphoric separation, is that statesmen 'strive to reconcile domestic and international imperatives simultaneously'.⁶⁴ This view stands in sharp contrast to the neo-Realist orthodox perspective which takes the state 'as a billiard ball whose internal components are impervious to foreign pressures'⁶⁵ and contends that domestic politics should not be allowed to interfere in foreign policy decision making because of the stakes.⁶⁶

It needs to be added that a majority of students of the global South have found the traditional distinction between internal and external environments problematic. For instance, for Christopher Clapham two intertwined legacies of the colonial period, the dependence of Third World states on, and their penetration by, external interests are at the root of this problematic.⁶⁷

Any chart of the flow of economic transactions, or still more sensitively of armaments, demonstrates the umbilical cord through which the third world is bound to the industrial states. Less easily measured but equally significant, is the

⁶² Gourevitch, 1978: 881-912.

⁶³ Ibid.: 911.

⁶⁴ Putnam, 1993 (first printed in 1988): 431-468.

⁶⁵ Krasner, 1978: 55;

⁶⁶ Rathbun, 2008: 304.

⁶⁷ Clapham, 1985: 113. Brian Job arrives at the same conclusion but alludes to penetration and intervention by other states and groups. See Job, 1992: 12.

way in which these transactions create and sustain domestic political groups whose interests tie them to the outside. In this sense, the traditional dichotomy which separates domestic from external politics and policy simply does not exist.

Both Kevin Dunn and Sandra Maclean, on the other hand, emphasise the importance of international financial institutions, namely the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, in African international relations as a major factor that either increasingly blur or obscure the assumed distinction between domestic and international spheres.⁶⁸

Moreover, Roger Owen points out the general disregard for state borders and national sovereignty in the 'Arab World' and the inclination of the actors in the region to get involved in cross-border events and processes. Then he maintains that 'there is less of a difference between domestic and foreign policy than in other parts of the world'.⁶⁹ As a reflection of this view, Owen discusses the practices and specificities of 'intra-Arab state relations' rather than 'inter-state Arab relations'.⁷⁰ The latter, needless to add, would tend to consign interactions between actors in the Arab world solely to the realm of foreign policy as if there is an unambiguous distinction.

Finally, for Eberhard Kienle the concurrence of the failure of the post-colonial state in the *Mashriq* (contemporary Arab East) to command the prime allegiance of its inhabitants with shifts of their political loyalties to actors beyond the border of the state indicates that 'the classical distinction between internal and external or home and foreign affairs is blurred'.⁷¹

Thus the traditional distinction between internal and external environments is helpful as a starting point but arguably more to demonstrate the problematic nature of the separation of domestic from foreign policy. Therefore, to adopt Owen's observation on the formal-informal sector dichotomy in an economy, foreign and domestic policy are better understood as a pair in 'both a relationship and a sharing of joint space rather than an absolute opposition across well-defined boundaries'.⁷² In other words, throughout

⁶⁸ Dunn, 2001: 51-52; Maclean, 2001: 149-150.

⁶⁹ Owen, 2004: 66-67.

⁷⁰ Ibid.: 56-72.

⁷¹ Kienle, 1990: 1-30. (Quotation is from p. 25).

⁷² Owen, 2001: 242.

this study domestic and foreign policy are seen ‘as distinctions along a continuum’⁷³ more disposed to overlap than to diverge.

As in the case of ‘foreign’, the meaning of the term ‘policy’ is not without its ambiguities. In its two main usages it can either connote a plan of action, statement of aims and ideals, or pragmatic responses to situations as and when they arise. As White conveys, these views of the term correspond, to a large extent, to Roy Jones’ conceptualisation of policy as ‘plan or design’ and policy as ‘practice’.⁷⁴ The answer given by Neville Chamberlain to a Labour critic in the (British) House of Commons in the interwar period is illustrative of different attitudes towards the term:⁷⁵

What does the hon. Member mean by foreign policy? You can lay down sound and general propositions. You can say that your foreign policy is to maintain peace; you can say that it is to protect British interests, you can say that it is to use your influence, such as it is, on behalf of the right against wrong, as far as you can tell the right from wrong. You can lay down all these general principles but that is not a policy. Surely, if you are to have policy you must take the particular situations and consider what action or inaction is suitable for those particular situations. That is what I myself mean by policy, and it is quite clear that as the situations and conditions in foreign affairs continually change from day to day, your policy can not be stated once and for all, if it is to be applicable to every situation that arises.

Mirroring its use in practice some scholars use foreign policy to refer to the principles, values or initiatives which guide a political unit’s general orientation towards its international environment. Others use the term to refer to the totality of day-to-day responses to events that concern relations between states and various actors and objects in their international environments.⁷⁶ What needs to be added is that an actor’s foreign policy, viewed as a dynamic process, involves both. Thus throughout this study foreign policy will be taken, following Korany’s elaboration above, as a continuous, broad phenomenon embracing not only general statements and long-term objectives but also relevant routine actions and responses such as trade exchanges, various types of agreements and the exchange of diplomatic notes.

⁷³ Wurfel and Burton, 1990:5.

⁷⁴ White, 1989: 7.

⁷⁵ Chamberlain, *The Struggle for Peace*: 33 as quoted in Carr, 1991:19-20.

⁷⁶ For examples of diverging usages, see White, 1989: 6; Jørgensen, 2004: 46-48.

2.2.2. Actors in Foreign Policy Analysis

So far an attempt has been made to explore the problems associated with the explanandum of FPA. But who are the ‘legitimate’ actors in foreign policy analysis? Inclusiveness or exclusiveness has a direct impact on the very notion of foreign policy itself as the following discussion attempts to demonstrate.

One common aspect of all definitions of, or elaboration on foreign policy given earlier is that when specified, the foreign policy actor, be it a country, a state, a nation-state, a government or a foreign policy system, possesses the legal quality of sovereignty. But these definitions denote a false consensus. Thus, Chadwick Alger, in accordance with the Pluralist approach, does not view the realm of foreign policy as an exclusive domain of government or government-related organisations as clearly indicated by the title of his essay: “‘Foreign’ Policies of US publics’. Indeed, seven out of his thirteen avenues for an individual’s participation by-pass government or government-related organisations.⁷⁷

Likewise, in his restatement of Liberalism, Moravcsik offers three core assumptions, the first of which unequivocally makes the case for the primacy of societal actors:⁷⁸

The fundamental actors in international politics are individuals and private groups, who are on the average rational and risk-averse and who organize exchange and collective action to promote differentiated interests under constraints imposed by material scarcity, conflicting values, and variations in societal influence.

States, in Moravcsik’s view, pursue varying configurations of security, wealth and sovereignty that reflect the preferences of powerful self-interested individuals and groups empowered by representative institutions and practices. Thus, the state as a representative institution is continually prone to ‘capture and recapture, construction and reconstruction by coalitions of social actors’.⁷⁹

Moreover, Christopher Clapham presents a powerful argument against the exclusion of non-state actors from foreign policy analysis. In his view, the long and devastating

⁷⁷ Alger, 1977: 277-293.

⁷⁸ Moravcsik, 1997: 516. For similar arguments, see Marsh, 1995: 125-148; Foyle, 2003.

⁷⁹ Moravcsik, 1997: 518.

experience of famine and warfare endured in that area of Africa which, from 1952 until Eritrea's independence in May 1993, formally constituted Ethiopia, had far reaching consequences not only for the people of the region but also for the study of foreign policy.⁸⁰

As the nature of states change, both territorially and through the transformation of domestic politics; as heavily armed and well organised movements contest the power of formally constituted governments; and as much as the business of international relations comes to be conducted by private organizations, it becomes clear that every significant actor in the tangled politics of the region, whether drawn from inside or outside it, has its 'foreign policy'; the foreign policy of, say, Oxfam or the Tigray People's Liberation Front are every bit as much a part of the picture as those of the people who, at any particular moment, hold formally recognized positions in the government in Addis Ababa.

Additionally, in his investigation of the divergent trajectories whereby five major Arab countries⁸¹ adopted foreign policy orientations congruent with the tenets of Westphalian sovereignty, Fred Lawson grants the leaderships of local nationalist movements actor status not only before their states gained formal independence but in fact well before they won effective autonomy from their imperial overlords.⁸²

Similarly, in a volume on foreign policies of Arab states⁸³ a chapter was devoted to the foreign policy of a non-state actor, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation prior to the conclusion of the Oslo accords in September 1993 that opened the way for an internationally recognised Palestinian state,⁸⁴ whereas Lebanon, a sovereign state, member of both the United Nations and the League of Arab states, was left out since it 'provides an example of a state with no foreign policy'.⁸⁵ Mohamed Selim, in his justification of analysis of the foreign policy of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, invokes an alternative view which calls for the recognition of the behavioural attribute of autonomy instead of the legal quality of sovereignty as the defining characteristic of a foreign policy actor. As he explains, defining autonomy in this case as 'the ability to behave in ways that have consequences in international politics and cannot be predicted

⁸⁰ Clapham, 1999: 84-85.

⁸¹ Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Iraq and Syria.

⁸² Lawson, 2006.

⁸³ Korany and Dessouki (eds.), 1991.

⁸⁴ Selim, 1991: 260-309.

⁸⁵ Korany and Dessouki, 1991: 414. It is notable that in their subsequent work committed to examine foreign policies of Arab states in the context of globalisation a chapter is devoted to Lebanon. See, Salloukh, 2008: 283-318.

entirely by reference to other actors' would broaden the range of foreign policy actors to include multinational corporations and international non-governmental organisations, revolutionary movements, trade unions and scientific networks, and powerful domestic groups.⁸⁶

It remains to be added that another empirical domain in which the statist ontology has been explicitly challenged is the European Union. Students of foreign policy analysis find a state-centred approach in the form of inter-governmentalism problematic since their subject matter, with its multi-level system of policy making, encompasses not only the foreign policy activities of individual states, but also those of a single European actor constituted by the same member states.⁸⁷

In view of the foregoing assertions and the accompanying examples an inclusive approach is considered more appropriate for foreign policy analysis. Yet, the admission of, to use Roseanu's dichotomy presented in his bifurcationist paradigm, sovereignty-free (i.e. subnational, supranational, or transnational) actors in addition to 'sovereignty-bound actors' (i.e. states) as units whose policy behaviour is to be included in foreign policy analysis may be contestable but has significant ramifications. As Martin Hollis and Steve Smith underline, 'the very notion of a foreign policy process changes, as the issues and the actors involved challenge the distinction between domestic and international environments'.⁸⁸ Besides, the question of issues involved takes us to another major contentious point; the delineation of the subject matter of FPA, or more specifically to the distinction between what has conventionally been called 'high' and 'low' politics.

2.2.3. On the Subject Matter of Foreign Policy Analysis: 'High Politics' vs. 'Low Politics'

As stated earlier, in the post-World War II Realist view the issues which should constitute the subject matter of analysis consist of causes of war and the conditions of peace/security/order and merit the designation of 'high politics' while all other political, economic, social and environmental issues fall into the 'low politics' category. The argument behind this distinction and the marginalisation of issues of economic and

⁸⁶ Selim, 1991: 260.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Jørgensen, 2004: 32-56; White 2004a: 11-31.

⁸⁸ Hollis and Smith, 1991: 38-39.

social welfare and their distribution between and within states is not that they are unimportant but rather that they are irrelevant to the workings of the inter-state system.⁸⁹

Yet, it must be pointed out that not all Realists adopt this narrow delineation of the subject matter. Of these, prominent neo-Realists such as Stephen Krasner and Robert Gilpin have viewed the interaction of economics and politics as a fundamental feature of international politics and have contributed to the emergence of a Realist political economy. For example, acknowledging that ‘the importance of economic factors in global politics has grown continuously with the expansion of a highly interdependent world market economy, Gilpin argues that ‘there is mutual and reciprocal interaction between the political system and the economic system’. He therefore includes economic factors such as the law of uneven growth in his explanation of the processes of international political change.⁹⁰

In a more recent body of work which has been classified as neoclassical Realism, scholars widen their scope of enquiry as they bring together economic, political and ideological factors in domestic and international politics. Jack Snyder, in a representative example, links the pattern of late development to overexpansion which he defines as self-encirclement by belligerent behaviour and/or persistent expansion into the periphery beyond the point where costs begin to exceed benefits.⁹¹ In his attempt to explain the frequent occurrence of great power overexpansion, Snyder considers variation in the type of domestic political structure – unitary, cartelised and democratic – and the timing of industrialisation – early, late, ‘late late’ industrialisation – as crucial. The empirical validity of his theory is tested by the examination of five cases of great power politics: Great Britain in the Victorian period, Germany and Japan in the pre-World War II era, and the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Accordingly, late industrialisation, as in Germany and Japan, is correlated with cartelised politics and immobile, concentrated elite interests. In cartelised political systems which are most prone to overexpansion, ruling coalitions are formed by parochial groups or ‘cartels’ each with concentrated interests dissimilar to those of other

⁸⁹ Zalewski and Enloe, 1995: 295.

⁹⁰ Krasner, 1985; Gilpin, 1975 (quotations are from p. 67 and p. 69). Note that Gilpin objects to his classification as a neo-Realist and uses ‘new realism’ instead. See Gilpin, 1986: 300-321.

⁹¹ Snyder, 1991: 6 and 305. For a critical review see, Zakaria, 1992.

such groups. Bargaining among these parochial groups proceeds by logrolling, a process in which favours are traded in such a way that each interest group gets what it wants most in return for overlooking the detrimental consequences of the policies of its coalition partners. In addition to logrolling, the empowering of parochial interests also requires an imperialist ideology to propagate myths invented to justify overexpansion. The whole argument, on the other hand, is succinctly summarised as follows.⁹²

The experience of the industrialised great powers suggests that coalition politics and ideology offer the single best explanation for the strategic ideas that contribute to overexpansion. Though the international factors stressed by Realism also play an important role, their effects are skewed by domestic coalition making and ideological myth-making.

It is notable that while including social, economic and ideological factors at both domestic and international levels in his analysis, Snyder asserts that ‘Realism must be recaptured from those who look only at politics between societies, ignoring what goes on within societies’ and pits himself against ‘truncated Realists’ who have also been wrong in ignoring the role ideology plays in enhancing the power and shaping the perceived interests of political groups, especially when information is monopolised and interests are uncertain’.⁹³

Neoclassical Realists have also criticised ‘the narrowing of intellectual focus in the field of grand strategy’⁹⁴ that results from the earlier Realists’ emphasis on the external environment and have sought to broaden their purview by the inclusion of domestic politics, economics and ideas as intervening variables. As summarised by Nicholas Kitchen in his attempt to establish the role of strategic ideas as an intervening variable to describe ‘how the structural pressures of power in the international system are translated into foreign policy outcomes’,⁹⁵ neoclassical Realists acknowledge that these outcomes are ‘influenced not only by exogenous systemic factors and considerations of power and security, but also by cultural and ideological bias, domestic political considerations and prevailing ideas’.⁹⁶

⁹² Snyder, 1991: 32.

⁹³ Ibid.: 19.

⁹⁴ Rosecrance and Stein, 1993: 4.

⁹⁵ Kitchen, 2010: 119.

⁹⁶ Ibid.: 133.

For example, Richard Rosecrance and Arthur Stein contend that ‘grand strategic assessments focusing only on narrow constituents of realism – material power, changes in its distribution and external threat – are radically incomplete and do not account for what nations actually do’. Instead, they assign, together with other contributors to their volume, a vital role in the choice of a grand strategy to ‘domestic groups, social ideas, the character of constitutions, economic constraints (sometimes expressed through international interdependence), historical social tendencies and domestic political pressures.’⁹⁷

In another neoclassical Realist work Steven Lobell takes a view similar to Rosecrance and Stein as he asserts that ‘grand strategy is not only military, but also fiscal and political in nature’.⁹⁸ As a result, in his endeavour to integrate the Realist current that ‘accentuates systemic pressures as determining but ignores the influence of domestic politics on a state’s grand strategy’ with domestic political approaches that ‘grant domestic coalitions primacy but neglect the influence of international politics’,⁹⁹ Lobell arrives at the conclusion that a declining hegemon’s grand strategy is guided by its international commercial environment and the domestic coalitional outcome.¹⁰⁰

As Rosecrance and Stein maintain, the study of grand strategy is a realm where countries would be most expected to pursue neo-Realist imperatives and therefore ignore domestic pressures, rein in ideological compulsions and surmount economic restraints.¹⁰¹ Yet, as the above mentioned studies attest, departures from these expectations in a way that have broadened the purview of the Realist tradition have been found essential to the understanding of dynamics of even war and peace.

Despite these studies of grand strategy and others that have sought to integrate political, economic and ideological factors at both domestic and international levels, there still exists a strong current which stands firm in its advocacy of a narrow delineation of the scope of enquiry. Emblematic theorists of this view include Morgenthau, Waltz and

⁹⁷ Rosecrance and Stein, 1993: 5.

⁹⁸ Lobell, 2003: 3.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*: 8.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*: 19.

¹⁰¹ Rosecrance and Stein, 1993: 12.

Mearsheimer whose influential works remain among the key reference points in contemporary debates.

For Morgenthau, for example, ‘the concept of interest defined in terms of power’ marks politics ‘as an autonomous sphere of action and understanding apart from other spheres such as economics (understood in terms of interest defined as wealth), ethics, aesthetics, or religion’. Morgenthau further argues that this conception interest provides the key to separate the political from non-political and contends that ‘without such a concept a theory of politics, international or domestic, would be altogether impossible.’ The implications for the scope of enquiry are also stated unambiguously: ‘The concept of interest defined as power imposes intellectual discipline upon the observer, infuses rational order into the subject matter of politics, and thus makes the theoretical understanding of politics possible’.¹⁰²

Waltz, like Morgenthau, portrays international politics as ‘the realm of power, and of struggle’ and argues that ‘the international realm is pre-eminently a political one’.¹⁰³ Waltz defends his focus on the issues of high politics and their primacy on both historical and theoretical grounds. In his view, ‘since Thucydides in Greece and Kautilya in India, the use of force and possibility of controlling it have been the preoccupations of international political studies’.¹⁰⁴ Thus ‘the dismaying persistence’ of the anarchic character of international politics over several millennia accounts for taking survival as the highest end, and for the subordination of economic gain to political interests.¹⁰⁵ While Morgenthau’s narrow conception of politics leads to a narrow understanding of politics,¹⁰⁶ Waltz follows him almost verbatim in and asserts that ‘neorealism establishes the autonomy of international politics and thus makes a theory about it possible’.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, although acknowledging that ‘everything is connected to everything else’,¹⁰⁸ Waltz argues that ‘theory isolates one realm from all others in order to deal with them intellectually’ and ‘can be written only by leaving most matters

¹⁰² Morgenthau, 1993: 5.

¹⁰³ Waltz, 1979: 113.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*: 186.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*: 66, 105 and 107.

¹⁰⁶ Cozette, 2004: 431.

¹⁰⁷ Waltz, 1990a: 29.

¹⁰⁸ Waltz, 1979: 8.

that are of practical interest'.¹⁰⁹ According to Waltz, a successful systems theory 'has to show how international politics can be conceived of as a domain distinct from the economic, social, and other international domains that one may conceive of'.¹¹⁰ It is also notable that Waltz leaves no theoretical room for the inclusion of 'elements of practical importance' since 'the rich variety and wondrous complexity of international life would be reclaimed at the price of extinguishing theory'.¹¹¹

In the same vein Mearsheimer places power at the centre of his theory of offensive Realism in his attempt to explain how security competition inevitably leads to great-power war or, as the title of his major work denotes, to *the tragedy of great power politics*.¹¹² Indeed, Mearsheimer maintains that 'for all realists, calculations about power lie at the heart of how states think about the world around them. Power is the currency of great power politics, and states compete for it among themselves. What money is to economics, power is to international relations'.¹¹³ Mearsheimer argues that structural factors such as anarchy and the distribution of power are what matter most for explaining international politics¹¹⁴ which in his view 'is still synonymous with power politics, as it has been for all recorded history'.¹¹⁵ The international system compels 'great powers to maximize their relative power because that is the optimal way to maximize their security'.¹¹⁶ Thus, Mearsheimer's theory 'pays little attention to individual or domestic considerations such as ideology. It tends to treat states like black boxes or billiard balls'.¹¹⁷ As for non-security goals, Mearsheimer asserts that offensive Realism does not say much about them except for one superseding point: 'states can pursue them as long as the requisite behaviour does not conflict with balance of power logic'.¹¹⁸ While the assumed zero-sum quality of the competition for power between states makes war 'an acceptable instrument of statecraft',¹¹⁹ power is defined 'largely in

¹⁰⁹ Waltz, 1990a: 29 and 31.

¹¹⁰ Waltz, 1979: 79.

¹¹¹ Waltz, 1990a: 32.

¹¹² Mearsheimer defends his exclusive focus on great powers 'because these states dominate and shape international politics and they also cause the deadliest wars'. See Mearsheimer, 2001: 17.

¹¹³ Ibid.: 12.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.: 5.

¹¹⁵ Mearsheimer, 2010: 92.

¹¹⁶ Mearsheimer, 2001: 21.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.: 10-11. As he conveys in his earlier work: 'Realism's treatment of states as billiard balls of different sizes tends to raise the hackles of comparative politics scholars who believe that domestic political and economic factors matter greatly for explaining foreign policy behaviour'. See Mearsheimer, 1994-1995: 49.

¹¹⁸ Mearsheimer, 2001: 46.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.: 18.

military terms because offensive realism emphasizes that force is the *ultima ratio* of international politics'.¹²⁰

According to Mearsheimer, states operate in separate international political and international economic environments but when the two come into conflict the former dominates the latter. As he explains, 'the international system is anarchic, which means that each state must always be concerned to ensure its own survival. Since a state can have no higher goal than survival, when push comes to shove, international political considerations will be paramount in the minds of decision-makers'.¹²¹

However, this contemporary adherence to the distinction between what Francis Bacon had called 'considerations of power' and 'considerations of plenty' is derivative of the experience of the United States in the years following the World War II.¹²² With the unfolding of the Cold War, American policy makers devoted a considerable amount of their time to the East-West confrontation. Since economic interactions with the Soviet Union were negligible, they were able to concentrate on issues which were largely of a military nature.¹²³ On the other hand, while dealing with their advanced industrialised allies, issues of a military nature were rarely openly linked to economic issues,¹²⁴ although notable exceptions such as burden sharing existed¹²⁵ and US military superiority remained in the background.¹²⁶ During the same era, a great deal of IR theorising was done by American scholars whose work reflected the policy concerns of their own country.¹²⁷ As explained by Robert Gilpin 'the early post-war generation of American realists, despite their other virtues, had their eyes fixed so firmly on the power struggle between the superpowers that they overlooked the economic relations beneath the flux of political aspirations'.¹²⁸ Moreover, as noted by David Baldwin 'the

¹²⁰ Ibid.: 56, emphasis in original.

¹²¹ Mearsheimer, 1990: 44.

¹²² On the origins of the distinction and the compatibility of both considerations, see Viner, 1948: 1-29; Anderson, 1979: 35-37.

¹²³ Crawford, 1995: 153-155.

¹²⁴ Keohane, 1984: 137.

¹²⁵ Kirshner, 1998: 64.

¹²⁶ Strange, 1995: 158-159.

¹²⁷ Hoffmann, 1987: 41-60; Biersteker, 1999; Smith, 2002. Notable exceptions include the proponents of the so-called 'English School' with their emphasis on the Groatian international society of states as opposed both to the Hobbesian state of war of all against all and the Kantian universalist tradition. The name, however, is a misnomer since Hedley Bull, its major proponent, was an Australian who built his career in England while many leading British scholars did not subscribe to the notion of society of states. See, Buzan, 2001. For its most authoritative assertion within these caveats, see Bull, 1977.

¹²⁸ Gilpin, 1986: 310.

primacy of national security, defined largely in military terms, came to be viewed more as a premise than as a topic for debate'.¹²⁹

While drawing primarily on the post-World War II experience of the United States in adopting a seemingly clear cut distinction between issues of 'high' and 'low' politics, leading Realists such as Morgenthau, Waltz and Mearsheimer dispensed with a rich intellectual tradition of integration that can be traced to the nineteenth century and before between the two categories.¹³⁰ As Jonathan Kirshner highlights, their close association was assumed and understood as a matter of course prior to the Cold War.¹³¹ In this respect, Germany's cultivation of asymmetric bilateral trade relationships in the interwar period with the countries of Latin America and Southeast Europe which made them vulnerable to its own policies represents a prime example.¹³² The case of Turkey as recounted by Edward Weisband is, on the other hand, instructive not only in demonstrating the intimacy of 'high' and 'low' politics but also how a militarily and economically vulnerable state could use such an asymmetric trade relationship with Germany, a big power, to its advantage.¹³³

What is regarded as primarily salient may vary not only over time within a country but from country to country and is therefore contextual. Thus, although Realists whose theorising was largely based on the experience of the United States failed to take notice, issues of economic nature were regarded as issues of 'high politics' elsewhere in the world even during the Cold War. Examples from different regions are abundant¹³⁴ and some are in order to illuminate the point. For instance, as Cal Clark and Steve Chan attest in a concluding chapter to a volume on the dynamic interaction of international structure and domestic processes in the Pacific Basin, for most of the East Asian countries in the region the primary goal of national security encompassed not only defence matters, but economic development and welfare matters as well.¹³⁵ Likewise, in a volume that concentrates on the Middle East, no less than five contributors contend

¹²⁹ Baldwin, 1995: 126.

¹³⁰ Tooze, 1987: 350; Kirshner, 1998: 64-91; Chavagneux, 2001; Ripsman, 2006.

¹³¹ Kirshner, 1998: 69.

¹³² Lauren, Craig and George, 2007: 58-60.

¹³³ Weisband, 1973: 65 and 88-115. Also see Yetkin, 1983: 225-249 and Keyder, 1990: 93.

¹³⁴ For the Latin American region see, e.g., Simpson and Wrobel, 1987: 309-312 and Tickner, 2008. For Africa see, e.g., Bischoff and Southall, 1999: 173 and Nzomo, 1999:195.

¹³⁵ Clark and Chan, 1992b: 208.

and show by focusing on a theme or a single country¹³⁶ that issues of ‘low’ politics ‘could indeed be, in the context of many underdeveloped countries, the stuff of national security – a new “high” politics’.¹³⁷ Finally, in a further example from the Middle East, Tom Pierre Najem argues that the overwhelming preoccupation of pre-civil war Lebanon’s formal foreign policy was economic relations, especially the promotion and preservation of the country’s status as the primary financial and commercial centre of the eastern Mediterranean. While making his case Najem adds that it would be no exaggeration to maintain that many Lebanese had historically regarded the health of their country’s economy as ‘the one truly national interest that the state exists to serve’.¹³⁸

Therefore this study argues for an inclusive approach that does not confine the contours of enquiry to external military threats and the projection of power abroad. Restrictive views with respect to the delineation of the subject matter fail to address foreign policy concerns of a vast majority of states which count an overwhelming majority of the population of the world as their inhabitants. In many of these states, as it had been the case prior to World War II when they existed as independent entities and during the post-war period once they were free of colonial rule, issues dismissed as irrelevant to international theory have been ascribed a fundamental value.

The preservation of consensus on central issues, a recurrent theme in the dominant tradition, is highly desirable to enforce an academic field’s claim to the status of a ‘discipline’ but the criterion of representativeness, that is, the examination of sufficiently large and diverse number of cases, over time, is equally important for the reputable development of a field. Both these factors have to be taken into consideration and be given due weight while approaching the problem of ‘the essential contours of a field of enquiry’.¹³⁹ In this respect Frederick Dunn’s 1948 flexible conception of a discipline has not ceased to provide a valuable guidance:¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ See esp. Lawson, 1993: 100-126; Pfeifer, 1993: 127-144; Chatelus, 1993: 145-168; Wenner, 1993: 169-184; Nakhjawani, 1993: 185-204.

¹³⁷ Korany, Brynen and Noble, 1993: 98.

¹³⁸ Najem, 2005: 102.

¹³⁹ Holsti, 1990: 9-10

¹⁴⁰ Dunn as quoted in Coleman, 1972: 31.

A field of knowledge does not possess a fixed extension in space but is a constantly changing focus of data and methods that happen at the moment to be useful in answering an identifiable set of questions. It presents at any given time different aspects to different observers, depending on their point of view and purpose. The boundaries that supposedly divide one field of knowledge from another are not fixed walls between separate cells of truth but are convenient devices for arranging known facts and methods in manageable segments for instruction and practice. But the foci of interest are constantly shifting and these divisions tend to change with them. Although more slowly because mental habits alter slowly and the vested interests of the intellectual world are as resistant to change as those of the social world.

While the universe of IR has to continue to expand to accommodate once neglected socio-economic, environmental, ethical, ideational, and cultural issues as well as novel ones that may come into being in the future, foreign policy analysis which arose out of a profound discontentment with Realism's unitary actor assumption as captured by the billiard ball metaphor, subscribed to the predominant paradigm's narrow definition of the subject area and, as a consequence, suffered from its limitations. Despite the existence of pioneering works and considerable progress that began to be registered particularly in the post-1980 period, the great-power bias and the narrow delineation of the subject matter worked to produce a considerable gap with respect to the foreign policies of the less developed states of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East especially during the Cold War era.

2.3. Foreign Policy Analysis and the Third World/Global South

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, different terminology including the 'Third World' is used to label the post-colonial countries and the circumstances in which they find themselves. As Marcin Wojciech Solarz maintains in his article that marked the sixtieth anniversary of its coinage, the phrase still remains one of the most frequently used terms for describing the global South. Yet, its meaning and utility has also been, from the very beginning, controversial and the subject of various debates.¹⁴¹ Therefore, before moving on to the main section on the state of the study of Third World foreign policies, a discussion of the provenance of the term, its evolution and the debates surrounding its usage will be undertaken and a justification of its employment as an analytical category will be given.

¹⁴¹ Solarz, 2012a: 1561.

2.3.1. The Term ‘Third World’ as an Analytical Category

As explained by Leslie Wolf-Phillips, following an animated debate in the pages of the 1979-80 *Third World Quarterly* series of articles, it was established that the term ‘Third World’ – or rather ‘*tiers monde*’ – had been coined by French demographer and economic historian Alfred Sauvy in 1952. As used in the 1950s, the term combined, in line with Sauvy’s analogical context with the *Tiers État* at the time of the French revolution, ideas of ‘neglect, exploitation and revolutionary potential’ on the one hand, and the idea of political non-alignment on the other. It was more in the latter sense that the term was used by the leaders of the newly independent states in the 1950s, such as Kwame Nkrumah, when they called for the establishment of a bloc of uncommitted nations as a ‘non-nuclear Third Force’ between the East-West confrontation of the Cold War period. With the emergence of a growing number of new states as decolonisation gained pace in the 1960s and early 1970s, the term ‘Third Force’ with its strong emphasis on non-alignment became used less frequently. Instead, the term ‘Third World’, expressing the existence of a large number of countries with a shared history of colonisation or informal imperial control and characterised by varying degrees of underdevelopment, dependence, vulnerability and poverty gained wider currency.¹⁴²

It should be noted that the term ‘Third World’ makes sense only in the context of a single world. Before the creation of a global political and economic system the indefinitely varying political and socio-economic structures of Asia, Africa and the Americas shared no common features which could bring them together as a single category for analysis. However, as Clapham highlights, what is distinctive about this political and economic system is not that it inescapably engenders dependence, underdevelopment and poverty, but that it integrates the previously scattered communities to a global system of production and distribution.¹⁴³ In this respect, the significance of the role played by and the legacy of the formal colonial rule or indirect imperial control can hardly be overestimated for a number of reasons. First of all, unlike the organically created European state, in most if not all cases, the colonial state was imposed from outside. Although its artificiality was betrayed by dead-straight boundaries that were so unmistakably the work of colonial officials who acted in accordance with the interests of the metropolitan powers, the new state continued to

¹⁴² Wolf-Phillips, 1987.

¹⁴³ Clapham, 1985: 3 and 12.

serve as the principle site of political activity in the post-independence era. Secondly, although the experience of colonial rule and economic penetration varied considerably, the colonial period underlined the subordinate status or peripherality of 'Third World' states which entered the world capitalist economy mainly through the supply of primary products and cash crops, and depended on technology and capital goods from the dominant industrial economies that were primarily behind the creation of the world economy in the first place. Thus while societies with their own internal structures and dynamics were incorporated into a set of global interactions and institutions with their own dynamics, boundaries were redrawn, many pre-existing social ties and solidarities were altered or replaced by new ones, political institutions and processes were adjusted or supplanted, new political forces were mobilised and the systems of appropriating and distributing incomes were transformed.¹⁴⁴ The term 'Third World' (or global South)¹⁴⁵ enables the analyst to approach these phenomena in the light of a structural context at a global level and not as isolated affairs. Indeed, one of the key strengths of the term is that it locates the shared characteristics of these states and their societies in a global structural context.

However, the very utility of the term can also be questioned on several grounds. For example, with the collapse of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and with the disintegration and change of the political system in the Soviet Union, the phrase 'Third World' now seems less appropriate than it might once have been. These significant changes swept away the 'Second World' as a separate entity and removed the Cold War as an important factor in global politics. According to Michael Cox these systemic changes 'rendered illogical the whole idea of a Third World –a concept that only made sense in an international system where there were two poles and not just one'.¹⁴⁶ In addition, if the expectations of solidarity among developing countries that found their expression through the establishment of international organisations such as the Non-Aligned Movement and the 'Group of 77' in the United Nations¹⁴⁷ or the campaign for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) contributed to the popularisation of the phrase, the passage of time pointed, as Louise Fawcett and Yezid Sayigh allude, to the

¹⁴⁴ See, Halliday, 2005: 41-50; Owen, 2004: 7-19; Moon, 1995: 19; Clapham, 1985: 1-25.

¹⁴⁵ For a history of the North-South divide see, Solarz, 2012b.

¹⁴⁶ Cox, 2001: 133.

¹⁴⁷ While there were 77 founding members of the organisation, the grouping has since expanded to include 132 member countries.

weakening of such expectations of solidarity, ‘or perhaps revealed how fragile and transient the concept of a Third World identity had always been’.¹⁴⁸ Finally, the vast accumulation of wealth in some oil producing states, the achievement of economic developments in South Asian states, China and some Latin American countries when combined with the deepening material despair in those states identified as ‘heavily indebted poor countries’ (HIPC)¹⁴⁹ sharpen the differences within the ‘Third World’ and contribute to the questioning of the term to cover a highly diverse group of countries with different development trajectories.

Indeed, some have questioned, either prior to or as a result of the end of the Cold War, the utility of the term and argued that it should be abandoned.¹⁵⁰ For example, in his analysis in the introductory article to the special twenty-fifth anniversary issue of *Third World Quarterly* that was devoted to the idea of the Third World, Mark Berger maintains that ‘the age of the Third World has passed irrevocably into history’. In his view ‘it was the contradictions inherent in the universalisation of the nation-state system and the global economic order of the cold war era that both produced the Third Worldist challenge and eventually helped to undermine it as a serious alternative to liberal capitalism or state-socialism. ... Challenging neoliberal globalisation and post-cold war capitalism means moving beyond territorial politics of nation-states – a politics to which Third Worldism is inextricably linked’.¹⁵¹ Moreover, Robert Zoellick, the former President of the World Bank, argued in 2010 that the Third World as a category no longer applies due to the emergence of ‘a fast-evolving multipolar world economy’ in which some developing countries have become new sources of growth in the wake of the economic crisis whose full weight was felt in mid 2008.¹⁵²

In contrast to those that have called for discarding the phrase, there are others who use, defend and attempt to reinvent its meaning. For instance, while probing the role of the Third World in Anglo-American IR literature and making the argument that the Third

¹⁴⁸ Fawcett and Sayigh, 1999: 6.

¹⁴⁹ HIPC refers to forty countries (mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa) with high levels of poverty and debt burden which are eligible for an ongoing debt relief initiative launched jointly by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in 1996. International Development Association and International Monetary Fund, 2011.

¹⁵⁰ For a Cold War period overview see Muin, 1979.

¹⁵¹ Berger, 2004: 30-31.

¹⁵² Interestingly while proclaiming that ‘development is no longer just North-South. It is South-South, even South-North, with lessons for all with open minds’, Zoellick also contended that ‘North and South, East and West, are now points on a compass not economic destinies’. Zoellick, 2010.

World continues to figure largely on the margins, Caroline Thomas and Peter Wilkin use the term to ‘refer to those countries and peoples that share some of the common problems of lack of voice or say in global affairs, a vulnerability to external forces beyond their control and the poverty and economic and physical insecurity which characterises citizens’ lives’.¹⁵³ Moreover, Fawcett and Sayigh assert that the continued use of the term Third World needs not only explaining but also defending.¹⁵⁴ Finally, maintaining that ‘the niche of the Cold War’ which provided non-aligned countries a manoeuvring space between the two superpowers has been replaced by a ‘horrible global order of unitary dominance’, Hee-Yeon Cho proposes ‘a revived Third World’ to serve as a ‘countervailing collective power’.¹⁵⁵

While taking note of the criticisms levelled against the continued use of the phrase and the controversies about its meaning, this study concurs with Fawcett and Sayigh who maintain that ‘there was an identifiable Third World during the Cold War. It is argued here that sufficient, if loose and fluid commonalities did exist in the thirty or so years between the emergence of the Third World and the end of the Cold War to justify the use of the collective term’.¹⁵⁶ As for the post-Cold War period, there is no doubt that some former Third World states have come to display more commonalities with developed countries, attesting in turn not only to the vagueness of the boundaries that separate categories of states but also to the shifting nature of these boundaries. Yet, although the picture is highly differentiated and complex, central characteristics of vulnerability to the workings of the global market and the lack of meaningful influence in global governance institutions continue to be shared by a large number of states. Besides, interstate and intrastate inequalities and vulnerabilities have persevered. As Caroline Thomas asserts, the greater part of ‘poor people lived in the Third World states, they do today, and in the absence of remedial action, they will live tomorrow’.¹⁵⁷ Hence the phrase will be used as an analytical category, alongside global South,

¹⁵³ Thomas and Wilkin, 2004: 243.

¹⁵⁴ Fawcett and Sayigh, 1999: 6.

¹⁵⁵ Cho, 2005.

¹⁵⁶ Fawcett and Sayigh, 1999: 7.

¹⁵⁷ Thomas, 1999: 244. See also Smith, 2004b: 508-509. Thomas’ assertion is further vindicated by a contemporary UN Report which states that despite some significant progress ‘estimates indicate that about 1 billion people will be living on less than \$1.25 a day in 2015 – corresponding to a global extreme poverty rate of just below 16 per cent. Four out of every five people living in extreme poverty will live in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. ... The 6.2 million child deaths, in these two regions in 2010 corresponded to 82 percent of such deaths on a global scale’. UN, 2012: 7 and 27.

developing countries and less developed countries,¹⁵⁸ to refer to a large number of Asian, African, Latin American and Middle Eastern countries with a shared history of colonisation or informal imperial control and characterised by varying degrees of underdevelopment, dependence, vulnerability and poverty.

Thus in this study Syria is taken as a Middle Eastern Arab state that shares key characteristics of the Third World. As asserted by Halliday, ‘for all the talk of a special, unique region, the states of the Middle East bear comparison with others in similar positions within the international system’.¹⁵⁹ The employment of the phrase as an analytical category helps approach the characteristics and foreign policy objectives of post-independence Syria in a way similar, though not identical, to the rest of the Third World/global South and as a consequence contributes to interdisciplinary communication between IR and the study of the Middle East. Indeed, related to the gap between IR and Middle East Studies, which has progressively been bridged by prominent studies after the end of the Cold War, there also existed a profound, yet narrowing, gap with respect to the study of the foreign policies of Third World states.

2.3.2. The Study of Foreign Policy and the Third World/Global South

In 1983, in one of the most notable evaluations of the state of the art during the Cold War era, Baghat Korany complained about the foreign policy analysts’ neglect of the Third World, found the studies of Third World foreign policies unsatisfactory and called them ‘the underdeveloped study of underdeveloped countries’.¹⁶⁰ More than two decades later, in a major study that sought to probe the constitutive role played by global South institutions, policy networks and norms in influencing the foreign policies of post-colonial states, Chris Alden and his colleagues presented their undertaking as part of attempts towards ‘rectifying the “lost history” of the Cold War where the foreign policy and diplomacy of South states has been systematically ignored by traditional scholarship’.¹⁶¹ Meanwhile, in an observation pertaining to the Middle East, Fawaz Gerges identified a tendency to see the region through the lenses of the dominant powers that led to the narrowing of focus and minimisation of sub-systemic processes.¹⁶² Accordingly, the development of area studies during the Cold War years

¹⁵⁸ For a concise overview of the problems with the usage of each of these labels see, Green and Luhmann, 2007: 5-6.

¹⁵⁹ Halliday, 2005: 49.

¹⁶⁰ Korany, 1983: 465.

¹⁶¹ Alden, Morphet and Vieira, 2010: 2.

¹⁶² Gerges, 1991: 211-212.

‘reflected more than before the need of the Great Powers to influence the processes of change and stability within the region’.¹⁶³ Kevin Dunn, echoing Gerges, critiqued the marginalisation of the African continent on the world’s political stage due to the ‘arrogant’ assumption that ‘Africa does not have meaningful politics, only humanitarian disasters’. Dominant theories, as he maintained, either employ a narrow ‘great power’ focus or approach the continent as an ‘agent-less victim of Great Power/core manipulations’. As a result ‘Africa exists only to the extent that it is acted *upon*’.¹⁶⁴ Concurring with these assessments, Laurie Brand underscores ‘the need for studies that examine a greater percentage of developing states’ foreign policy and that view such policy from the point of view of the smaller power, not merely as reactive to great power activity or demands’.¹⁶⁵ In a similar manner, Clapham emphasises the necessity for a view from bottom up to ‘complement and even correct the perspective gained by looking from the top downwards’.¹⁶⁶

Even though the gap between the study of foreign policies of the global North and the global South has been narrowing since the latter has been attracting an increasing amount of attention, a general dissatisfaction with the state of the FPA is still notable among students of the Third World. As the above examples testify, students of the Third World recurrently criticise traditional IR and FPA theoretical literature for looking at the world from the viewpoint of its most powerful or developed states and emphasise the need for more studies that reflect the perspectives and the characteristics of their less developed counterparts.

Although a variety of different specific criticisms exist, three main reasons can be suggested for the relative shortfall and underdevelopment of Third World foreign policy studies. These are Realism’s (classical and neo-Realist) great-power bias and the narrow conception of foreign policy that marked the subfield of FPA during the decades that followed the end of World War II, the limitations of the foreign policy decision-making

¹⁶³ Ibid.: 214. Gerges subsequently employed the concept of ‘regional sub-system’ as a conceptual and analytical framework to study the relations between the superpowers and the Arab Middle East from 1955 to 1967. Thus he underlined, based on his empirical analysis, the importance of sub-systemic inter-Arab dynamics and also specified the conditions under which local actors were able to manipulate and extract concessions from the United States and the Soviet Union. See Gerges, 1994.

¹⁶⁴ Dunn, 2001: 1-3, emphasis in original. For a qualified defence of IR theories against the ‘Africanist critique’ represented by Dunn, see Brown, 2006.

¹⁶⁵ Brand, 1995: 15.

¹⁶⁶ Clapham, 1996: 4.

frameworks, and the overemphasis on the idiosyncratic sources of Third World foreign policies.

In the predominant Cold War era Realist tradition, nation-states as unitary and rational actors pursue national interests defined in terms of power in a self-help anarchic world and maintain the balance of power. Accordingly, in the absence of a supreme world authority and with war an ever-present possibility, states act primarily against threats from abroad to protect their territorial and political integrity through increasing their capabilities or forming alliances. Behaviour is basically derived from the distribution of capabilities in the international system and the position of the individual state in that system. As Stephen Walt explains, 'Realism dominated in the Cold War years because it provided simple but powerful explanations for war, alliances, imperialism, obstacles to co-operation and other international phenomena, and because its emphasis on competition was consistent with the central features of American-Soviet rivalry'.¹⁶⁷ No wonder that, as the predominant tradition, Realism also played a major role in defining the mainstream subject matter of FPA in a way that privileged war fighting capability, defence of borders and projection of power and influence abroad. This narrow conception of foreign policy tended to direct scholarly attention to those states high up in the international hierarchy of power and to the marginalisation of the post-colonial states as 'having no foreign policy of their own'.¹⁶⁸ As a consequence, Third World foreign policies were either understudied or, when studied, the tendency was to view them as objects of great power rivalry.

On the other hand there has also been notable attempts to broaden the universe of Realism by focusing on the Third World to generate theoretical propositions. Mohammed Ayoob's perspective of 'subaltern realism'¹⁶⁹ and Steven David's theory of 'omnibalancing'¹⁷⁰ are two prominent examples of this genre to be considered below.

As a prelude to make his case for subaltern realism, Ayoob criticises neo-Realism and neo-Liberalism mainly for privileging the experiences, interests and dynamics of interactions of the great powers and the affluent industrialised states of the global North,

¹⁶⁷ Walt, 1998: 31.

¹⁶⁸ Korany and Dessouki, 2008: 1.

¹⁶⁹ Ayoob, 2002.

¹⁷⁰ David, 1991.

for their inability to explain the behaviour of a large majority of states in the international system and for failing to explain the origins of most conflicts. His alternative perspective draws upon the experiences and the concerns of Third World states. He labels these states as the 'subalterns' due to both their relative powerlessness and position as a large majority in the international system.¹⁷¹ In Ayoob's perspective domestic order issues, principally related to the process of state formation, are accorded analytical priority and presented as the primary determinants of the contemporary conflicts in the international system. While building on classical realist thinkers, historical sociology and the normative insights of the English school, and notwithstanding his assailment of neo-Realism, Ayoob firmly places his perspective in the Realist tradition 'because it accepts the three fundamental elements of "essential realism" – statism, survival and self-help.'¹⁷²

David, on the other hand, provides a criticism of the traditional balance of power theory that focuses on the state's need to counter external threats and argues for its modification in a way that would take into account the distinctive characteristics of the Third World. Thus his notion of omnibalancing rests 'on the assumptions that leaders are weak and illegitimate and the stakes for domestic politics are very high – conditions that are much more common in the Third World than elsewhere'.¹⁷³ Considering both internal and external threats to explain alignment behaviour, David's omnibalancing expects vulnerable Third World leaders to appease state level external threats to counter more pressing domestic challenges. It also suggests that these leaders may act against the interests of the state in order to remain in power.

While both Ayoob's and David's studies represent major steps towards overcoming the great-power bias that marked theorising in traditional Realism, what they want to explain remains limited to the traditional issues of high politics: 'the majority of conflicts' in the international system in the case of Ayoob and 'Third World alignment and realignment' in the case of David. Indeed, whereas Ayoob's 'subaltern realism' has rightly been criticised as a perspective that seeks to 'preserve the discipline's focus on security issues',¹⁷⁴ David's 'omnibalancing' required further modification to be

¹⁷¹ Ayoob, 2002: 38-41.

¹⁷² Ibid.: 41.

¹⁷³ David, 1991: 236.

¹⁷⁴ Barnett, 2002: 57.

applicable within ‘a conceptual framework for understanding Syrian and Iranian foreign policy and behaviour, including their alliance’.¹⁷⁵ Hence, Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Raymond Hinnebusch, in some ways pointing to the limitations of its original formulation, suggest that the notion of omnibalancing be extended ‘to mean attending not only to security threats but also to capital accumulation and rent acquisition requisites’.¹⁷⁶ In short, while contributing to making the Third World/global South more visible in Realist theorising, both subaltern realism and omnibalancing continue to suffer from some certain limitations of the theories they endeavour to enhance and therefore remain limited in their application.

Decision-making approaches, on the other hand, have made a momentous contribution to the development of the study of foreign policy by challenging the Realist model’s conception of a unitary and rational actor which is captured by the ‘billiard-ball’ metaphor as well as its determinism that privileges systemic causes of behaviour and leaves out domestic factors. The limitations of the existing foreign policy decision-making frameworks, however, are among the reasons that account for the shortfall of Third World foreign policy studies. Brecher, Blema Steinberg and Janice Stein, for example, rightly state that the most serious shortcoming of the pioneering framework developed by Synder and his associates in 1954 relates to its applicability. To make their case Brecher and his co-authors criticise Synder’s model for its ‘extraordinary complexity’, for its excessive burdens of ‘imaginative enterprise’, for the overwhelming number of its variables and for the enormity of the data that must be processed.¹⁷⁷ However, their alternative model is burdened with a similar overload. Even an advocate of this model admits it makes almost impossible demands on the student of the subject.¹⁷⁸ Besides, the data required, for example to reconstruct the decision flow or the psychological environment of the principle decision makers, is almost impossible for a non-insider to obtain since it requires exceptional high level connections and even access to reliable accounts of secret deliberations as is the case in Brecher’s leading study of Israel’s behaviour in the ‘1967 and 1973 Crisis’.¹⁷⁹ Thus it is no surprise that one of the researches involved in the worldwide application of Brecher’s crisis

¹⁷⁵ Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, 1997: 6.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*: 19.

¹⁷⁷ Brecher, Steinberg and Stein, 1969: 77-78.

¹⁷⁸ Clark, 1989: 39.

¹⁷⁹ Brecher, 1980: 1-32.

behaviour model to Zambia has been quoted as cautioning that ‘much of the primary evidence needed for any exhaustive analysis is unattainable, unrecorded or beyond the recall of the principal participants’.¹⁸⁰ In a related manner, Douglas Lemke attributes Africa’s omission from international relations databases to three mutually reinforcing reasons: the difficulty of collecting data, concern about the quality of the data that are gathered and the profound underdevelopment and fragility of African states.¹⁸¹

Indeed, Allison and Morton Halperin, the two pioneers of the bureaucratic school, clarified that their model was intended for the analysis of the foreign policies of the advanced industrialised countries¹⁸² while Margaret Hermann affirms that since models of foreign policy decision making have had a markedly US flavour, they have not fared as well when applied particularly to non-democratic, transitional and less developed polities.¹⁸³

Another reason for the general dissatisfaction with the state of the literature on Third World foreign policies is the paramount and at times overriding importance attributed, in both theoretical and empirical works, to the idiosyncratic sources of the phenomena. In a related fashion practitioners tend to enforce the same view.

Among works of a theoretical nature which take into account the internal characteristics of polities, Rosenau’s pre-theory of foreign policy provides an example. In its abbreviated formulation, Rosenau ranks five set of variables (idiosyncratic, role, governmental, societal and systemic) according to their potencies in eight types of societies differentiated in terms of their size (large/small), state of the economy (developed/underdeveloped) and nature of the political system (open/closed). Accordingly, idiosyncratic variables are the most important source of foreign policy in all underdeveloped countries irrespective of their size or their political system. As Rosenau explains, that is due to the existence of ‘fewer of the restraints which bureaucracy and large-scale organisation impose in more developed economies’.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Korany, 1986: 57. Remarkably, in the Middle East, Adeed Dawisha has attempted to apply the same framework to Egypt and Syria. Dawisha, 1976; Dawisha, 1980.

¹⁸¹ Lemke, 2003a: 116.

¹⁸² Allison and Halperin, 1972: 40-79.

¹⁸³ Hermann, 2001: 49.

¹⁸⁴ A further elaboration of the model incorporates two analytical dimensions (issue-areas and permeability). Then, in penetrated small underdeveloped countries, irrespective of the nature of the

Migdal's concurring argument is based on similar grounds: 'because the bureaucracy of Third World states is not as complex, autonomous, and coherent as in world's powers and superpowers, researchers of foreign policymaking in these states would do best to focus directly on the top leadership'.¹⁸⁵

In this respect the tendency to over-emphasise idiosyncratic sources of policies and to attribute failures and accomplishments to a single leader may reach its extremes in political biographies as is the case in Moshe Ma'oz's work on Hafez al-Asad of Syria.¹⁸⁶

True, Asad's external and domestic policies have faced grave problems and suffered serious setbacks. On balance, though, his achievements, especially in regional affairs, seem to be quite remarkable, all the more so when one considers that most, if not all, of those achievements have been accomplished singlehandedly by Asad himself. Naturally he is assisted by scores of advisors, ministers, army officers, but he makes all the important decisions and runs the country as a one-man show. He is as close to one-person regime as one can envisage, the almighty of Syria.

Standing in sharp contrast to those accounts that almost amount to the reification of the leader, studies exist that try to establish the role of personality disorders as sources of what has been described as 'reckless' and 'adventurous' policies by Henry Kissinger.¹⁸⁷ Relying heavily on psycho-analytic theory these studies try to illustrate how the early childhood experiences of the leader influence his later political behaviour and decision-making. But often, the lack of extensive material on the leader's early life has forced scholars to fall back on unsubstantiated hearsay. An example of such a study is Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi's political biography of Saddam Hussein of Iraq. In an attempt 'to demonstrate that Hussein was not an unpredictable megalomaniac but that he followed a consistent pattern of aggression', the authors claimed that 'he had no friends among the village boys, who often mocked him for being fatherless, and he used to carry an iron bar to protect himself against attacks. ... Saddam often amused himself by

political system or the type of the issue areas, systemic variables replace individual ones as the most potent variables. In all other variations of underdeveloped societies, individual variables are retained as the most potent. Rosenau, 1966/1980: 115-169.

¹⁸⁵ Migdal, 1974: 522.

¹⁸⁶ Ma'oz, 1988: p. xi. Other biographical work on Hafez al-Asad include Seale, 1988; Zisser, 1994; Khalil, 1995. For attempts to bestow the status of a 'cult hero' upon Hafez al-Asad, see Weeden, 1999.

¹⁸⁷ Kissinger, 1966: 503-529.

putting such a bar on the fire and after heating it red, stabbing a passing animal in the stomach, splitting it in half'.¹⁸⁸

In a way, it is understandable that a great deal of work on the foreign policies of Third World states focuses on the leadership factor as the explanatory variable. As Johan Saravanamuttu points out, it is the very factor that springs up as the 'most apparent and conspicuous'.¹⁸⁹ The lack of complex bureaucratic organisations and the fragility of political institutions turn the making of foreign policy into a largely personal exercise in these countries. Thus who governs makes a difference and studies that stress idiosyncratic sources of policy are great value as Weinstein and Hinnebusch maintain.¹⁹⁰ Even those that pay attention to psychological aberrations may be useful as long as they are based on academically acceptable evidence and provide insights into the behaviour of the leader.

The thrust of the criticism, however, is that over-emphasis on the leadership factor in Third World foreign policy studies has led to the neglect of both systemic and domestic political and socio-economic variables. Thus Korany asserts that what he disputes is not the relevance of psychological-idiosyncratic variables, but the degree of their influence. In his view, Third World studies lagged further behind in analysis because of 'psychological reductionism, a modern version of the 'great man' theory of history, which attributes everything to the leaders' idiosyncratic or perceptual variables'.¹⁹¹ Similarly, Nonneman acknowledges the significance of the impact of certain personalities on particular choices, but at the same time he concludes that an overemphasis on this factor at the expense of domestic and environmental determinants can inhibit a proper understanding of foreign policy patterns.¹⁹² Finally, as Halliday maintains, the idea that foreign policy decisions are made by the leader or a small secretive band is not only widely shared in the Middle East and elsewhere but it also contains a significant truth about it. Yet as he also alludes, that idea coexists with the not so uncommon belief that external powers control these leaders and their foreign policies. Identifying both as simplifications, Halliday emphasises the need to take into

¹⁸⁸ Karsh and Rautsi, 1991: 9. This unsubstantiated episode fittingly made its way to Saddam's obituary authored by David Hirst for *The Guardian* of United Kingdom dated December 30, 2006.

¹⁸⁹ Saravanamuttu quoted in Khalid, 1999: 30.

¹⁹⁰ Weinstein, 1972: 356; Hinnebusch, 2003a: 120.

¹⁹¹ Korany, 1983: 469. For a restatement of this assessment see Korany and Dessouki, 2008: 23-26.

¹⁹² Nonneman: 2005: 8-10.

account the ever-changing interplay of civilian and military interests within the state structure, state capacity, public opinion, norms and the external context.¹⁹³

Therefore, it is a contention of this study that for a proper analysis of Third World/global South foreign policies we should acknowledge that foreign policy is part of the general situation of the Third World/global South and resonates with the transformation of that situation.¹⁹⁴ Studies that emphasise leadership factors should be complemented if not substituted by others that incorporate domestic socio-economic structures and political processes. These can further be enriched by factoring in regional and global material and ideational structures as well as systemic constraints and opportunities. As suggested by Ole Holsti, personality factors can be taken as one of the several clusters of independent variables that explain foreign policy behaviour, or in turn, they can be viewed as a dependent variable in which case investigations into questions pertinent to the characteristics of the wider domestic or systemic settings become fruitful lines of enquiry.¹⁹⁵ While there is no doubt that interaction with psychology has enriched the study of foreign policy by providing insights to aspects of the phenomena that had been unaccounted for, there is much to be gained along the same lines by enhanced interaction with political sociology, political economy, anthropology, social theory and so forth. The interdisciplinary and eclectic nature of FPA is a cause for celebration since it connects, as articulated by Margot Light, IR to other social sciences through these qualities.¹⁹⁶

2.4. The Study of International Relations and Foreign Policies of the Middle East: Contemporary Perspectives, Frameworks, and Studies on Post-Colonial Syria

As alluded to earlier, a remarkable number of prominent works on international relations and foreign policies of the Middle East have been published especially in the early years of the twenty-first century. Offering a wide variety of perspectives and frameworks, and building on earlier investigations, these studies have played a notable role in the enrichment of the study of Middle East international relations and foreign

¹⁹³ Halliday, 2005: 50-72.

¹⁹⁴ Dessouki and Korany, 1991:10.

¹⁹⁵ Holsti, 1970: 153- 157. In this respect it is revealing that in his work on the foreign policy of Iraq during Saddam Hussein's rule, Charles Tripp underlines not only the central role of Saddam Hussein but also the significance of the 'legacies of an Iraq that could produce Saddam Hussein's regime'. Tripp, 2002: 189.

¹⁹⁶ Light, 1994: 96.

policies. They have also contributed to the closing of the gap between the study of the foreign policies of global South and the global North.

The diversity of literature can be illustrated on the basis of several themes. While some focus on the international relations of the region broadly defined or its ‘Arab core’, others concentrate on the foreign policies of individual states or non-state actors. In terms of the particularistic-universalistic divide we have representative works at both ends of the divide and the great majority that fall between the two positions. Moreover, while some value parsimony and devise their theories accordingly, others suggest resolutely eclectic analytical frameworks that explicitly draw on a variety of perspectives. Some of these works argue for the primacy of material structures and some others base their arguments on the salience of normative structures but there are also studies that draw attention to the interaction between moral universes and material possibilities.

A review of these and some other theoretically remarkable investigations as well as significant works that touch upon Syria’s foreign policy in its post-independence period is offered below together with a justification for the approach adopted by this thesis. It will become apparent throughout this extensive review that despite the diversity and notwithstanding the frequent acknowledgement of the role of acquisition of the external resources in foreign policy formation or the recognition that socio-economic needs may shape a state’s policies, the studies that comprise this burgeoning literature rarely assign a pivotal role to these factors in their approaches or the frameworks they propose.

As the editor of *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*, Brown conveys the perspective of the book in the introduction and elaborates on it further in the concluding chapter.¹⁹⁷ Accordingly, he presents the Middle East as an international sub-system that has been thoroughly penetrated by major extra-regional powers for no less than two centuries. In addition to this generally agreed upon argument, Brown also forwards a highly contested assertion which leads to his viewing the Middle East ‘as a region like no other’.¹⁹⁸ Hence, building on his earlier

¹⁹⁷ Brown, 2004a: xiii-xxix and Brown, 2004b: 303-306.

¹⁹⁸ Valbjørn, 2004: 55 and Gause, 1999: 24.

work,¹⁹⁹ Brown contends that the Middle East as an international sub-system has a distinctive diplomatic culture shaped by history and geography. As he explains, this distinct diplomatic culture came into existence and was consolidated throughout what conventional historians call 'the age of the Eastern Question', the extended period from the late eighteenth century until the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century that saw the dismembering of the Ottoman Empire by European states. For Brown, however, the 'Eastern Question' as a 'political game with its many elaborate rules' did not end at the beginning of the twentieth century, it rather continues to characterise international relations in the Middle East. Based mainly on these arguments, Brown maintains that states of the region interact with each other and outside powers in a 'complex pattern of multipolar diplomacy'. Moreover, they initiate bilateral and multilateral alliances or enrol in the already existing ones, in a 'multipolar balance of power system heavily weighted toward maintenance of the status quo'. As a consequence, states of the region, despite their weaknesses and their unpopular rulers, manage to survive and none can attain the status of the regional hegemon.

Although the outcomes suggested by Brown are largely consistent with the expectations of Realism's balance of power theory²⁰⁰ what sets Brown's approach apart is his insistence on the existence of a unique and nearly permanent diplomatic culture that continues to govern Middle East international relations. As such it implies that the distinct characteristics of the Middle East require a Middle Eastern particularistic approach. The volume in general has, on the other hand, been criticised for lacking a common theoretical framework that could have served as a common guideline for disparate chapters on foreign policies of individual states covered in the book.²⁰¹

In contrast to Brown's approach which emphasises the uniqueness of the Middle East especially in terms of its diplomatic culture, Halliday asserts that the states of the region share the characteristics of similarly situated Asian, African and Latin American states within the international system and are therefore comparable to them. As he expounds, the main shared traits include a past of economic incorporation and subordination to a capitalist system that has been expanding for over five centuries, and a process of state

¹⁹⁹ Brown, 1984.

²⁰⁰ See Gause, 1999: 24.

²⁰¹ Valbjørn, 2003: 166-167.

formation reflecting this incorporation.²⁰² Thus Halliday proposes an alternative approach which combines insights drawn from historical sociology and Marxism with the international dimensions of contemporary politics and society. Labelled by Halliday as ‘historical and international sociology’, this perspective ‘looks at the core components of a political and social order, the state, ideology and society’. Moreover, it ‘focuses specifically on how institutions are, be they of political or social/religious power, are established and maintained. It seeks to locate them within the historical and international contexts in which they originated, and in terms of a set of questions about how, at any one time, they are created and maintained’.²⁰³ Both the state and the system, two central terms of Realism, are also fundamental to Halliday’s approach but conceptualised rather differently. So, while the system is taken as an outcome of the expansion of modern capitalism and not as ‘a timeless world of interstate anarchy’, the state is seen ‘*as an institution of coercion and appropriation* which operates on two levels, the internal state-society dimension and the state-state dimension’.²⁰⁴ On the other hand, Halliday’s perspective differs from Constructivist approaches that see ideas, values and norms as constitutive domain of politics; instead it incorporates them as part of the process of legitimation and coercion.

As mentioned earlier with a particular reference to Wendt’s work, Constructivists emphasise the importance of normative and ideational structures because these are thought to shape the identities and interests of social and political actors and influence their actions. Thus, understanding the processes of formation and transformation of identities and exploring the role of ideas, norms, values, culture, and argument in social life have been a major part of the Constructivist research programme.²⁰⁵

In a study that contributes to this research programme, Telhami and Barnett make the claim that ‘no student of Middle Eastern international politics can begin to understand the region without taking into account the ebb and flow of identity politics’.²⁰⁶ As they assert in the introduction, their edited volume aims to further ‘our understanding of how

²⁰² Halliday, 2005: 305-306.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*: 36.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*: 37, emphasis in original.

²⁰⁵ Hopf, 1998: 192; Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001: 392-394.

²⁰⁶ Telhami and Barnett, 2002: 2. For a discerning critical review see, Hinnebusch, 2003b.

the formation and transformation of national and state identities affect the foreign policy of Middle Eastern states'.²⁰⁷

Drawing on the analyses and findings of the chapters on six selected states of the region, Stephen Saideman outlines five possible relationships between identity and foreign policy in the concluding chapter of the volume: (i) identity serves as a prop, in other words as a justification for what leaders decided to do; (ii) identity influences what is possible and legitimate as a policy and what is unthinkable or unimaginable; (iii) identity constructs the preferences of states; (iv) identity raises the costs of policies pursued for other reasons; (v) identity shapes outcomes.²⁰⁸ Hence the views of the contributors to the volume vary in terms of the relationship between identity and foreign policy. For example, in his focus on Syria, Yahya Sadowski points to the decline of the pan-Arab ideology and identity in favour of a more particularistic Syrian identity and suggests that Syrian foreign policy under Hafez al-Asad tended to flow from structural *realpolitik* considerations.²⁰⁹ Similarly, while Ibrahim Karawan maintains that identity matters in the case of Egypt, he also asserts that 'the role of external and internal settings that made certain courses of states action more acceptable at one time than another is equally important'.²¹⁰ At the other extreme, in his chapter on Jordan, Marc Lynch presents a Constructivist casual theory linking the institutional foundations of public debate, identity, interests, and foreign policy behaviour. In his view, the change in Jordan's identity as expressed by the 'Jordan is Jordan and Palestine is Palestine' formula in the wake of the 1988 severing of ties with the West Bank and the consequent transformation of the state's conception of its interests as illustrated by the policy shift from opposing to backing a Palestinian state stands as a powerful example of the casual relationship between identity and interests.²¹¹ In contrast to Lynch who remains committed to casual or explanatory theory, Barnett attempts, in his chapter on Israel, to identify the conditions that make certain actions possible.²¹²

²⁰⁷ Ibid.: 6.

²⁰⁸ Saideman, 2002: 177-182.

²⁰⁹ Sadowski, 2002: 151.

²¹⁰ Karawan, 2002: 162.

²¹¹ Lynch, 2002.

²¹² Barnett, 2002: 60.

In fact Lnych and Barnett's diverging positions correspond to a noteworthy methodological divide among Constructivists.²¹³ In this respect some Constructivists remain committed to causal or explanatory theory but treat their findings as contingent upon time and place since the notion that there are timeless laws or regularities 'out there' waiting to be discovered is commonly rejected. Others shift the focus to 'how possible questions' which are interpretive in nature. As Roxanne Lynn Doty explicates in posing such a question one can:²¹⁴

examine how meanings are produced and attached to various social subjects/objects, thus constituting particular interpretive dispositions which create certain possibilities and preclude others. What is explained is not *why* a particular outcome obtained, but rather *how* the subjects, objects, and interpretive dispositions were socially constructed such that certain practices were made possible.

Hence, in line with his interpretive methodology, Barnett does not make the maximal claim that identity causes behaviour. Instead he maintains that identity makes some courses of action possible and legitimate while leaving others unthinkable. Barnett's ensuing examination of the relationship between the Israeli national identity and the Middle East Peace Process reflects his focus on the 'how possible question': 'a peace process that allows for the withdrawal from the occupied territories becomes possible, legitimate, and even desirable' if the Israeli collective identity 'is defined by an explicit preference of democracy and Zionism over Greater Israel (defined in both religious and security terms) and a coalition ranks these values in a similar way'.²¹⁵

Barnett's earlier work, *Dialogues in Arab Politics*, represents a leading narrative of inter-Arab politics that contributes to the growing Constructivist scholarship on international politics.²¹⁶ Directly challenging Realist inspired accounts of Arab politics, Barnett asserts that the conflicts which characterised relations between Arab states in the greater part of the twentieth century stemmed not from 'anarchy and the desire to preserve the balance of power but from Arabism and the desire to define the norms of

²¹³ Hopf, 1998: 181-185; Houghton, 2007: 30; Checkel, 2008: 72-73.

²¹⁴ Doty, 1993: 298, emphasis in original.

²¹⁵ Barnett, 2002: 72.

²¹⁶ Barnett, 1998.

Arabism. The tools of conflict did not come from a military arsenal. They came from a cultural storehouse'.²¹⁷

In Barnett's account, Arab politics is best understood as a series of dialogues between Arab states concerning the desired regional order. Whilst a key feature of these dialogues was Arab states' competition 'through symbolic means to control the foreign policies of their rivals and determine the norms of Arabism', dialogues themselves refer to the 'ongoing debate by Arab states about the norms of Arabism and the relationship of those norms to their Arab identities'.²¹⁸ In his endeavour to trace the changes in the content of these dialogues Barnett focuses on three defining issues – the Arab states' relationship to unification, attitude towards the West, and the confrontation with Zionism – within five distinct periods: from the mandate period to the establishment of the League of Arab States in 1945; from 1945 through the debate about the Baghdad Pact in 1955; from the 1956 through the 1967 Arab-Israeli War; from the 1967 War through the 1990-1991 Gulf War; and the post-Gulf War period.

In Barnett's historical analysis Arabism initially appears as a sentimental movement unattached to a concrete political project but in less than a half a century it comes to be defined by the three aforementioned identity-expressive issues. Hence while a normative prohibition against the contemplation of relations or a separate peace agreement with Israel was firmly established in the ten-year period before the establishment of the Baghdad Pact, a strong norm against strategic alliances with the Western Powers was constructed in its aftermath. The prior formation of the Arab League was also important not only for sanctifying Westphalian sovereignty as an organising principle in the emerging Arab states system, but equally for giving an institutional and symbolic expression to the shared identity of its members. As Barnett put it: 'the recognition that they were Arab states that had shared interests meant that they were now susceptible not only to domestic public opinion but Arab public opinion, were capable of seizing on key Arab issues as a source of symbolic capital, and potentially susceptible to the charge that they were acting outside the Arab consensus'.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Ibid.: 10-11.

²¹⁸ Ibid.: viii-ix.

²¹⁹ Ibid.: 82-83.

The ascent of Arabism and the trend towards normative integration, however, was reversed in the 1960s as symbolic competition and conflict between Arab states transformed the very structure of Arab politics. The ensuing normative fragmentation, Barnett contends, was mainly of the Arab leaders' own making.²²⁰

how they played the game of Arab politics, itself a product of their interest in regime survival, led to estrangement rather than collaboration, difference rather than fraternity, fragmentation rather than integration. Strategic and symbolic interaction was responsible for creating new and separate identities, roles, and interests that encouraged Arab leaders to adhere to the norms of sovereignty and to privilege the discourse of state interests over Arab national interests. ... What began as a romantic movement at the beginning of this century has nearly returned to its original form at its end.

While Barnett's work goes along way in demonstrating that international relations theory can enrich our understanding of inter-Arab politics, it nonetheless remains prone to criticism. For instance, he underestimates the extent of the vulnerability of the Arab states (sub)system and its members' dependence on the extra-regional developed countries although these burdens posed a direct challenge to the establishment of a pan-Arab order. In this respect it is no coincidence that in most, if not all, critical moments the West or its regional allies intervened or weighed in and thus helped even the weakest Arab states to breach the norms of Arabism: British forces were invited to Jordan and the US troops landed in Lebanon in the wake of the Iraqi Revolution of 1958, a full fledged Syrian intervention in the clash between the PLO and Jordan in 1970 was successfully deterred by Israel and the US, the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait was repulsed in 1991 by a coalition of forces led by the US. Therefore in his attempt to show that agents and structure are mutually constituted, Barnett overstates the agency of the members of the Arab states (sub)system.

It is also noteworthy that building on Barnett's preposition that shared identities can be a source of both conflict and co-operation, Sonoko Sunayama has applied a Constructivist approach to Syria's 'paradoxical' relations with Saudi Arabia to demonstrate that 'shared' or 'transnational' identities between the two countries – namely Islam and Arab nationalism – played a key role in defining the aims and perimeters of foreign policy decisions. But as she maintains, her approach does not rule

²²⁰ Ibid.: 269-270.

out the explanatory power of ‘various forms of balance-of-power explanations, the economic factor in foreign policy decision-making, or the unique existence of social/personal ties across the Arab region.’²²¹

In his seminal work, *The Origins of Alliances*, Walt develops balance of threat theory as a refinement of the traditional balance of power theory and applies it to a set of bilateral or multilateral alliance commitments derived from the diplomatic history of the Middle East between 1955 and 1979.²²² Accordingly, whereas alliances are formed in response to imbalances of power in balance of power theory, Walt’s theory predicts alliance formation in response to imbalances of threat. The degree to which a state threatens others, on the other hand, is the outcome of not only its aggregate power but also its geographic proximity, its offensive capability and the aggressiveness of its intentions.

Although prone to serious criticism, Walt’s work is a notable study that offers a general theory and puts its main hypotheses to a systematic test in a non-Western area. Moreover, the extensive discussion of non-systemic factors such as ideology, penetration and foreign aid within the context of alliance formation enriches Walt’s investigation even though he undervalues their impact to add weight to his balance-of-threat theory. As a consequence, he has received serious criticisms from students of the Middle East. For example, Gause observes that his narrow understanding of ideology limits Walt’s ability to appreciate the significance of transnational ideological identifications.²²³ Brand, however, criticises Walt for ‘mischaracterising’ Arab alliance behaviour in a number of instances and leaving ‘a great deal un(der)explained or misrepresented’.²²⁴

A final but significant criticism that can be directed at Walt is related to his one-sided treatment of economic aid which betrays a great-power bias. Since he aspired to ‘resolve several important debates about US foreign and military policy’²²⁵ within the context of great-power rivalry, Walt concentrated on the effectiveness of foreign aid as a foreign policy instrument. That is why his key question became: ‘when does foreign

²²¹ Sunayama, 2007: 215.

²²² Walt, 1987.

²²³ Gause, 1999: 23.

²²⁴ Brand, 1995: 30.

²²⁵ Walt, 1987: 285.

aid give suppliers effective political leverage'.²²⁶ The examination of various bilateral aid relationships that did not bring leverage to the donor then formed the basis for his conclusion 'that economic and military aid are rarely effective instruments of control'²²⁷ as well as his (mis)characterisation of large aid relationships as 'primarily the result of alignment'.²²⁸ Undoubtedly Walt's central question is significant, but the contention here is that his discussion remains partial. At the very least in reaching his conclusions Walt fails to integrate recipients' motives for obtaining aid, their penchant for autonomy and the possibilities created by global conflict and competition during the Cold War for the management of their dependence.

In the post-colonial era, aid was often sought to promote economic development which in turn was seen as giving meaning to independence.²²⁹ Yet, Third World leaders were cognisant of the autonomy/aid dilemma and tried to transcend it.²³⁰ In this vein, the straightforward inscription of their concerns in aid agreements was not uncommon.²³¹ Great-power strategic thinking benefited some advantageously located Third World states enabling them to tap into the resources of the members of either the Eastern or Western Camps or even both at the same time without necessarily subordinating their domestic and foreign policies to those of the donor states. In other words, as policy makers in donor countries who viewed foreign aid as an instrument of control were inclined to maximise political return and became disappointed when their objectives were not realised, rulers in recipient countries tried to transcend the negative impacts of foreign aid on their autonomy, though the degree of their success varied considerably.²³²

²²⁶ Ibid.: 42.

²²⁷ Ibid.: 237.

²²⁸ Ibid.: 221 *passim*.

²²⁹ Robbins, 1965; Weinstein, 1972: 370; Sa'id, 1988: 67-104; Chatelus, 1990: 115; Ra'ad, 1991-1992: 4; Nzomo, 1999.

²³⁰ The emergence of the phrase neo-colonialism in the early 1950s with its focus on the element of control and its frequent use by anti-colonial Asian and African leaders is an indication. For an example of its usage (*al-isti'amar al-jadida*) in Syrian political discourse, see ASBP, 1982.

²³¹ For typical examples see the text of the first Syrian-Soviet economic and technical co-operation agreement [signed on 28 October 1957] which is reproduced in BBC/SWB, No. 388, 30 October 1957: 7-10 or Legislative Decree No. 149 of 12.7.1970, ratifying the scientific and artistic co-operation agreement [signed on 5 July 1969] and the agreement of economic and technical co-operation [signed on 10 July 1969] as reproduced in *Rapport 1969-70*: C49-C55.

²³² The resulting donor/recipient relationship can be characterised not only as 'a patron-client relationship' in which the donor obtains the leverage sought in exchange of aid but also as 'a marriage of convenience' which indicates a harmony of interests or even fall within 'the tail-wags-the-dog paradigm' that favours the recipient. Karsh, 1989; Hinnebusch, 2003a: 28-29.

On the other hand, it is not claimed that states do not act against external threats as they do especially when these threats are imminent but a theory which pins them down as the sole determinant of state behaviour is feeble and susceptible to disparagement.

Whereas Walt insists that universal rules as captured by his balance-of-threat theory apply to all regions, Hinnebusch suggests, in a collection of works some of which he co-authored or edited with Anoushiravan Ehteshami, that Realism has to be modified to take account of the unique features of the states system in the Middle East.²³³ Thus, as a starting point, it is accepted that the anarchic nature of a state system generates severe insecurity and a persistent struggle for power and also that states strive to counter threats through power accumulation and balancing as proposed by Realism. Moreover, it is argued that Realist assumptions and predictions are more likely to hold in consolidated state systems composed of relatively sovereign unified states. And the observation that the state system in the Middle East is still ‘in the *process* of consolidation’, leads to the assertion that ‘the dynamics of the “system level”, per se, has less effect on state behaviour than realism expects, why other levels, addressed by rival theories, have more’.²³⁴ Therefore insights of a variety of approaches are found invaluable and integrated into the analytical framework established for the study of both international politics of the Middle East and for the study of the foreign policies of the states of the region including the ‘Arab core’ as well as the three major ‘non-Arab’ periphery states, namely Israel, Iran and Turkey.

Accordingly, the framework incorporates elements of (neo-Marxist) Structuralism, with a particular reference to Galtung’s core-periphery relations model, to understand the first of the two distinct features of the regional system: ‘imperialism’s fragmentation of the Middle East into a multitude of weak states dependent on core states for security against each other, and its division of the unified regional market into small economies exporting primary products to the core and dependent on imports from it’; and insights of Constructivism because it better addresses the second distinct feature as it helps to understand how norms deriving from shared supra-state (pan-Arab and, to a lesser extent pan-Islam) identities ‘became as important in shaping Arab state behaviour as the

²³³ Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, 1997; Hinnebusch and Ehteshami (eds.), 2002; Hinnebusch, 2003a; Hinnebusch, 2005b. Unless otherwise stated, I draw on all these works in the following review.

²³⁴ Hinnebusch, 2002a: 1, emphasis in original.

distribution of material power stressed by Realism'.²³⁵ In addition, the framework includes Pluralism's opening of the black box of decision-making and interest in state formation, David's omnibalancing between threats from various levels, and finally the personality, values and perceptions of top leaders.

Ultimately Hinnebusch suggests that the foreign policy of any individual Middle Eastern state at any given time is shaped by the way its leaders, seeking to maximise security and autonomy, deal with contradictory pressures from global, regional and domestic levels. The expectation is that the more a state advances in terms of state formation, the more its leaders acquire the autonomy in foreign policy-making required to pursue policies resembling classic 'reason of state' and directed mainly at perceived external threats.²³⁶

Like the one proposed by Hinnebusch, the frameworks offered by the volumes edited by Korany and Dessouki, Nonneman, and Fawcett draw on a variety of approaches and emphasise contextualised multi-level and multi-casual explanations.²³⁷ Despite their differing aims and divergence in substance, all three frameworks site foreign policies of regional states in domestic, regional and international/global levels with Nonneman allowing for a fourth possible level, or a 'sub-environment' within the regional system such as the Gulf sub-system or the Maghreb. Another common point of these works is that, in a way similar to the volumes by Brown, Telhami and Barnett, and Hinnebusch and Ehteshami, they all include individual chapters authored by distinguished scholars of the Middle East and beyond.

Unlike Nonneman's and Korany and Dessouki's volumes which mainly focus on the foreign policies of individual states of the region, Fawcett's book aims to provide an comprehensive account of the international relations of the region. Moreover, Fawcett makes clear at the outset that her book does not favour any single approach but instead brings a wide spectrum of perspectives in a single all-encompassing volume. Yet, the individual chapters are organised around a central question: 'which are the topics and issues that students of International Relations and Middle East studies most commonly

²³⁵ Quotations from Hinnebusch, 2003a: 4 and 5.

²³⁶ See Hinnebusch 2002a and Hinnebusch, 2003a: 73-90.

²³⁷ Korany and Dessouki (eds.), 2008; Nonneman (eds.), 2005; Fawcett (eds.), 2013.

seek to address?'.²³⁸ Therefore, while the first of the three parts that follows the introduction by Fawcett offers a theoretical and historical overview, major themes and topics in international relations and international political economy of the region such as oil, democratisation and political reform, identities and ideas (particularly Arabism and Islam), alliances and management of regional politics, and patterns of war and security are covered in the second part. The third and final part, on the other hand, deals with key issues including the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Peace Process in the aftermath of the Israeli-Palestinian Oslo Accords as well as foreign policies of states from within the region. This final part also includes separate chapters on US involvement and Europe's role in the Middle East.

In his attempt to construct a conceptual framework for the examination of foreign policies of the states of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Nonneman makes a case for 'complex models of international politics' and insists that investigation 'should be open to the range of possible determinants that different schools in IR theory and Foreign Policy Analysis have drawn attention to, and systematically address them.'²³⁹ Accordingly the key questions that need to be dealt with involve the relative importance of: (i) the domestic versus the external environment; (ii) personalities/leaders versus environmental factors; (iii) economic versus political interests; (iv) the role of the decision-making process versus other factors; (v) autonomy versus dependence (or the debate over 'agency' versus 'structure'); (vi) and, the relative importance of the regional systems, especially in terms of their transnational ideational/ideological/identity features. Additionally, with particular reference to David's notion of omnibalancing, Nonneman maintains that policy makers have to balance threats and opportunities emanating from the external environment simultaneously with domestic level pressures. Basic interests of a regime, moreover, are identified as its own as well as the state's survival and consolidation, and the acquisition of resources to ensure them. Finally, in his assessment of the main trends since the 1950s, Nonneman suggests that the foreign policy orientation and behaviour of MENA states have increasingly shifted towards the pragmatic pursuit of regime and state interests, rather than transnational ideas, especially since the 1970s.

²³⁸ Fawcett, 2013: 10.

²³⁹ Nonneman, 2005: 11.

In their volume on the foreign policy of Arab states set in the context of globalisation, Korany and Dessouki adopt a political economy/historical sociology approach that views these countries 'as part of an integrated and hierarchical global system whose effects penetrate the decision-making process' yet leave 'room for manoeuvre which an insightful leadership can exploit'.²⁴⁰

The holistic and interdisciplinary framework proposed by Korany and Dessouki and applied to analyse foreign policies of nine Arab countries in individual chapters consists of the fourfold scheme advanced in their earlier work: (i) domestic environment (broken down into geography, population and social structure, economic capability, military capability, and political structure); (ii) foreign policy orientation; (iii) the decision-making process; (iv) military capability; and (v) foreign policy behaviour. Moreover, the 'role concept' forms an integral part of Korany and Dessouki's framework for analysis. Thus, they disaggregate foreign policy output or outcome into two main components: 'role conception' which designates the general objectives, orientation, or a strategy of a foreign policy actor; and 'role performance' which refers to specific foreign policy behaviour.²⁴¹ Based on this distinction they characterise the tension in the orientation of Arab foreign policies between the norms of Arabism and the interests of each individual state as a tension between 'role conception' and 'role performance'. They then point to an increasing 'discrepancy between the pan-Arab ideal and, *raison de la nation*, and state behaviour based on *raison d'état*'.²⁴² Therefore, despite their distinct conceptualisation, Korany and Dessouki are in agreement with Barnett's, and Hinnebusch's, Nonneman's and Fawcett's appraisals on the declining impact of Arabism on foreign policies of the Arab states especially in the post-Nasser era.

Besides these studies, there are other notable works that deal with the Syria's post-independence period covered by this study. For instance, Patrick Seale's classic *The Struggle for Syria* provides a vivid account of the personalities, events and trends from 1945 to 1958 but its emphasis is, though not exclusively, on the geopolitical dimension and especially Syria's role in the rivalry between Iraq and Egypt for regional primacy.²⁴³ Malcolm Kerr's acclaimed *The Arab Cold War* starts at the point in time

²⁴⁰ Korany and Dessouki, 2008b: 27-28.

²⁴¹ Korany and Dessouki, 1991a: 17-22 and Korany and Dessouki, 2008b: 27-41.

²⁴² Korany and Dessouki, 2008a: 5, emphasis in original.

²⁴³ Seale, 1986 (first published in 1965).

where Seale leaves off and remains an indispensable source on inter-Arab affairs and especially on the divisive aspect of Pan-Arabism. However, with its focus on ideological politics and President Nasser's bid for regional hegemony, it leaves the economic dimension largely untouched.²⁴⁴ George Lenczowski,²⁴⁵ Petro Ramet²⁴⁶ and David Lesch²⁴⁷ touch upon aspects of this dimension but their investigations largely remain within the bounds of Syria's bilateral relationships with either the United States or the Soviet Union. Bashar al-Ja'fari's *Syrian Foreign Policy* is worthy of praise for its treatment of post-independence Syria as a legitimate subject of foreign policy analysis.²⁴⁸ However, Ja'fari's account tends to be sketchy and lacks originality especially with respect to the pre-1970 period.

In a different approach, Rosenau's linkage politics model has been applied to explore the relationship between internal and external conflict in post-1961 Syria but the findings of the three available studies diverge to a great extent. The quantitative study of Robert Burrowes and Bertram Spector failed to confirm strong linkages between the two types of conflict for the entire 1961-1967 period.²⁴⁹ In a subsequent study Burrowes and Gerald DeMaio reordered the same data over different temporal segments and subjected them to multiple time series analysis.²⁵⁰ Consequently they found that during their first temporal segment which extended from October 1961 to August 1964, which they called early post-Union period, the interconnectedness was considerable. During their second temporal segment which extended from August 1964 through June 1967, referred to as the Ba'thist period, the two types of conflicts were 'more autonomous of, or insulated from, one another'.²⁵¹ With respect to the relationship between Syria's domestic conflict and its conflict with Israel, their conclusion is that no linkage existed in either period. Finally, Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov combined qualitative and quantitative methods in his study that covered the period from 1961 to 1970 and his findings contradicted the conclusions of previous research.²⁵² Accordingly, during the rule of both the separatist regime (29 September 1961 to 8 March 1963) and the subsequent

²⁴⁴ Kerr, 1971.

²⁴⁵ Lenczowski, 1972. Other works of the same genre but with not as much on Syria include Goldman, 1967; Laqueur, 1969; Golan, 1987.

²⁴⁶ Ramet, 1990.

²⁴⁷ Lesch, 1990.

²⁴⁸ Ja'fari, 1987.

²⁴⁹ Burrowes and Spector, 1973: 294-324.

²⁵⁰ Burrowes and DeMaio, 1975.

²⁵¹ Ibid.: 504.

²⁵² Bar-Siman-Tov, 1983.

Ba'th period Syria's internal and external conflicts were linked though differing in directions and with varying degrees. Most significant was the establishment of a link between a regime's legitimacy and its tendency to canalise conflict abroad. As Bar-Siman-Tov argued, both regimes attempted to exploit Syrian-Israeli and Arab-Israeli conflicts in an effort to limit the intensity of Syria's internal conflict while 'the tendency to canalise internal conflict into the external environment was even greater during the Ba'th regime because this regime had an even narrower base of legitimacy than did the separatist regime'.²⁵³

However, Bar-Simon-Tov's over-reliance on Israeli military sources with regard to the number of border incidents and their initiator raises the question of data reliability. Israel as one of the conflicting parties could be presenting its strikes as legitimate acts of retaliation to keep international opinion on its side.²⁵⁴ Therefore, while insecure regimes may be more tempted than others to heed the death-bed advice of Shakespeare's Henry IV's to his successor 'to busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels',²⁵⁵ Burrowes and DeMaio's suggestion that 'the domestication of international politics and/or the internationalisation of domestic politics' may be symptomatic of some other problems or challenges need to be taken into consideration.²⁵⁶ Certainly, an allowance needs to be made that requirements of economic development may account for conflictual as well as co-operative behaviour. Indeed, it has been argued that it was Israeli determination to carry out a number of development projects on the Syrian border, among them its 'National Carrier' project, and Syria's resolve to prevent their implementation which led to Syrian-Israeli border incidents and their intermittent escalation.²⁵⁷

This extensive review of the existing literature demonstrates that a wide range of theoretical perspectives or frameworks are now on offer to account for international relations or foreign policies of Middle Eastern states, or other non-state actors. This expanding literature has undoubtedly enriched our understanding of the international relations of the region and the foreign policies of its state and non-state actors. It has

²⁵³ *Ibid.*: 117.

²⁵⁴ Yaniv, 1986: 163; Seale, 1988: 119.

²⁵⁵ Bate and Rasmussen, 2007: 1013.

²⁵⁶ Burrowes and Spector, 1973: 294-324; Burrowes and DeMaio, 1975: 478-507.

²⁵⁷ Yaniv, 1986: 160-163; Seale, 1988: 118-121.

also directed attention to the role of the acquisition of external resources for a variety of purposes including regime consolidation and state formation. A few examples may suffice to illustrate this observation.

For instance, Nonneman depicts Europe as a source of resources and maintains that the central aim of a regime in the MENA region countries is 'likely to be its own consolidation and survival, along with the two sets of aims that enable this: the acquisition of resources, and the state- and nation-building exercise'.²⁵⁸ Moreover, Korany and Dessouki conceptualise 'the decision-making process in developing countries as a "resource gap problem" involving group conflict' mainly in order to open 'the door to further investigation of how and when an alliance between domestic and external groups can influence the resource gap and determine the decisions to be taken'.²⁵⁹ Finally the narrative of Arab politics given by Barnett, perhaps the least likely of the authors reviewed, is sprinkled with a certain degree of attentiveness to the importance of political economic factors and more particularly to the significance of the search for economic resources in foreign policy formation. Hence, while his account of President Anwar Sadat's decision to restructure Egypt's domestic and foreign policy in the 1970s incorporates economic imperatives in unambiguous manner,²⁶⁰ he also maintains that his predecessor President Nasser tried his best to promote his image as the 'leader' of the Arabs 'to attract more strategic and financial rents from the West'.²⁶¹

While this aspect of foreign policy only forms one of the numerous components in the analytical frameworks that offer multi-casual explanations or are subsumed under Arab leaders' concern with regime survival, it constitutes a pivotal element in this study. As stated earlier, this aspect of Syria's foreign policy in the period covered by this thesis remains understudied since existing studies on the country's post-independence era tend to overlook attempts at state formation, Syrian leaders' endeavours to foster the economy to meet the needs of their country, and the concomitant search for external resources deemed necessary for the realisation of these aims. This study focuses on these aspects and their interaction with other foreign policy objectives identified earlier

²⁵⁸ Nonneman, 2005: 12.

²⁵⁹ Korany and Dessouki, 2008b: 41.

²⁶⁰ Barnett, 1998: 182-183.

²⁶¹ Ibid.: 240.

as leadership maintenance/regime consolidation and attaining autonomy from external powers to give meaning to the country's independence.

The central argument of this study is that the interaction of these objectives as a complex process involving trade-offs and changing priorities is worth pursuing because it provides fundamental insight into Syria's foreign policy in the post-independence period and contributes to its understanding. The findings of and inferences from a systematic investigation of these interactions and accompanying trade-offs can also enrich the study of foreign policies of the states of the global South that exhibit characteristics similar to Syria's. The availability of studies that pursue these ends, would in turn, add weight to the resource-securing function of foreign policy in proposed frameworks for analysis.

Yet while striving to fill a notable gap in the literature on modern Syria through the investigation of these significant matters and also to contribute to the theoretical development of FPA, this study acknowledges that regimes confront a more complex set of considerations when making foreign policy. It also recognises the benefits that can be drawn from alternative approaches or proposed frameworks but also that none would possibly constitute *the* authoritative one.²⁶² The account provided on the Syrian foreign policy in the following pages or the political economy approach adopted in this study is, therefore, just one of the many possibilities.

²⁶² On this point see Sunayama, 2007: 12.

CHAPTER THREE

Precarious Independence and the Regime of Husni al-Za'im, March-August 1949

3.1. Introduction

In Syria, the colonial power created the essential feature of a modern state with internationally recognised boundaries, a capital city, a national anthem, a flag, and the institutional structures of parliamentary democracy. However, the emergent entity was fragile, weak and hardly in a position to project power and influence abroad. The low level of identification of its people with the state and with each other made it vulnerable to sub and supra-state challenges. Its economy was underdeveloped, primarily agrarian, in need of diversification and dependent on the import of capital goods, arms, and technology.

How would the new state's foreign policy relate to these problems? What would be the objectives of its leaders if they could not project power and influence abroad? Would they see foreign policy as an arena that would help them sustain their rule, increase their autonomy and provide the resources needed to promote the economic development of their country and meet the basic needs people?

This chapter starts presents a brief overview of the legacy of the French colonial rule in Syria that started in 1920 in a way that highlights the problems inherited by the rulers of Syria at independence. Then moves to examine the short but eventful regime of Husni al-Za'im who deposed President Quwwatli and the parliamentary government in a bloodless coup d'état on 30 March 1949. An analysis of his brief tenure shows that Za'im strove to expand, re-equip, reorganise and restore the prestige of the Syrian army which had been shattered by its dismal performance in the 1948 war against the nascent state of Israel. Likewise, he endeavoured to implement social and economic reforms, undertake large-scale development projects and bring prosperity to an independent Syria. Achievements in these fields would help him prolong and legitimise his regime and perhaps pave the way for the formation of a loyal constituency. To help accomplish

these aims, search for external economic resources became an integral part of the new regime's foreign policy.

3.2. The Emergence of Syria as a State of the Global South: The Historical Legacy of Colonialism

All Middle Eastern states possess the general characteristics which make them part of the global South.¹ Among them Syria presents a striking example and this factor contributes to making it an interesting case for study. Crucially, as in the most of the global South, Western encroachment and historical legacy of colonialism has left enduring remarks on the emergence of the Syrian state and its development.²

In the years following World War I, Western powers divided geographic Syria,³ which had been under Ottoman rule for the previous four hundred years (1516-1918), into four states; Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon, Palestine and supported the establishment of the state of Israel in Palestine. In 1920, French forces put an end to the two-year reign of the Hashemite-Arab government that had been established in Damascus immediately after the Turkish retreat and occupied Syria. The approval by the League of Nations in 1922 of France's assumption of the mandate for Syria (and Lebanon) provided the legal basis for French rule.⁴ Although the mandate charter put France under obligation to preserve the territorial integrity of Syria and Lebanon and institute constitutional governments there as a way of preparing their peoples for independence and democracy,⁵ the practice of the mandate holder ran counter to these stipulations. Unsurprisingly, the mandatory system of rule has been described as a dress up for 'outright colonial expansion'.⁶

Accordingly, the French, as in their colonies elsewhere and particularly in Morocco, instrumentalised existing local, regional and ethnic differences through a policy of

¹ For a remarkable study that upholds this view in relation to the Arab countries see 'Abdallah, 1978. For discussions of what constitutes the Middle East, see *Middle East Journal*, 1947: 1-4; Gause, 1999; Bilgin, 2004.

² For a stimulating analysis of the impact of the colonial legacy on Third World 'stateness', see Migdal, 1988. See also Alavi, 1972; First, 1989: 207-218; Owen, 2004: 7-17.

³ The name Syria, as Tabitha Petran stated, was first used by the Greeks. It 'designated in history the geographic region lying at the eastern end of the Mediterranean between Egypt and Anatolia and, at times, also political and administrative divisions within it. The Arabs who conquered this region in the seventh century called it *Bilad Al-Sham* "the country on the left" or north of Mecca, Islam's holiest city.' See Petran, 1972: 17.

⁴ The text of the charter of the Mandate is in Mu'allim, 1988: 555-560.

⁵ Articles 1 and 4 of the Mandate charter.

⁶ Khoury, 1987: 44-45.

divide-et-impera.⁷ Moreover, the district of Alexandretta (Hatay) which had a mixed population of Turks and Arabs and an autonomous administration within the mandate regime was relinquished to neighbouring Turkey on the eve of the World War II in a move that seemed to Syrians a blatant sacrifice of their country's territorial integrity for France's broader interests.⁸

In the economic sphere, Syria's process of integration to the international economy continued⁹ but policies were tailored to serve metropolitan interests rather than to promote Syrian economic development.¹⁰ While no new markets were found to compensate for the waning access to the traditional ones due to the dissolution of the Ottoman state and the partition of geographical Syria, the implementation of an open door policy for the best part of the 1920s and the measures taken to facilitate the penetration of French machine-made goods helped accelerate the decline of traditional industries and at the same time limited the capacity of the fledgling modern industry to stem the tide of ensuing unemployment. Thus, according to the available data, more than 100,000 artisans and workers, amounting to one-third of the total employed in all industry, traditional and modern alike, were left out of work between 1913 and 1937.¹¹ Furthermore, although detached from the defunct Ottoman state, Syria and Lebanon were denied a central bank and a private French bank was granted the exclusive right to issue a new paper currency, the Syrian-Lebanese pound.¹² Besides, well until the World War II, France exercised control over the largest source of public revenue in the mandatory territories through the direct administration of the Common Interests (i.e., the Customs Bureau, Tobacco Monopoly, Post and Telegraph, etc.).¹³

⁷ First, 1989: 214-215; Khoury, 1987: 55-57. See Table 1 in the Appendix for the breakdown of the Syrian population by religious communities and Muhafaza –the major administrative division in Syria- (1957).

⁸ See Sanjian, 1956; Khoury, 1987: 494-514; Qarut, 1989: 156-162.

⁹ For the process of integration during the Ottoman era, see Issawi, 1982; Owen, 1993.

¹⁰ Asfour, 1959: 5.

¹¹ Longuenesse, 1996: 102-103.

¹² This private French bank, Banque du Syrie, was founded in 1919 and subsequently renamed Banque de Syrie et du Liban (BSL). Himadeh, 1936: 263-282.

¹³ Custom receipts formed about 95 percent of the revenues of the Common Interests. Under the Customs Union Accord of 1930 imposed by the French, Syria and Lebanon were given 53 and 47 percent share of customs receipts respectively. Khoury, 1987: 88-89; Murad, 1992: 183.

Despite the promise of technical assistance, capital investment and prosperity at the beginning of the mandate period,¹⁴ the flow of public expenditures of Syrian states reflected the low level of concern for economic development. During the interwar period, spending on military, police and overlapping state administrations consistently overshadowed expenditures on education, health, agriculture, industry and public works.¹⁵

The fall of France in World War II also spelt the end of its mandate in the Levant. Syria finally became an independent republic on 17 April 1946 when the last French soldiers left the country.¹⁶ At independence Syria had a population of approximately three million, inhabiting an area of nearly 185 thousand square kilometres.¹⁷ Its boundaries were artificial in the sense that they were more of a reflection of the balancing interests of mandatory powers and those powers' policies and less of the outcome of the preferences of the indigenous people. Being an alien creation, whether it commanded the prime allegiance of its inhabitants or not was as yet indeterminate. Aspects of socio-political cohesion such as the identification of people with the state and its rulers (legitimacy) and of people with each other in a way that differentiated them from those left beyond the state boundaries (integration) were weak.¹⁸ Moreover, although the country enjoyed a wave of expansion during the Second World War due to the shortage of imports and the demands of the Allied troops in the region, its economy was underdeveloped, primarily agrarian and in need of diversification. Besides, the new state lacked basic infrastructure. Large sections of the country were without adequate transportation and communication facilities, without appropriate water and sanitary provisions and without electricity. The inadequacy of roads, railways and power stations created bottlenecks. Huge problems were also posed by poverty and illiteracy.¹⁹

Thus the challenges which faced the nationalist elites that steered Syria towards independence were formidable if not insurmountable. These elites – drawn mainly from some fifty big landowning and merchant families that were also getting active in the

¹⁴ See for example, the proclamation by Henry Gouraud, the first High Commissioner (the head of the French mandatory administration) for Syria and Lebanon (1919-1923), as reproduced in Sultan, 1996: 466.

¹⁵ See Table 1.1 in Owen, 2004:11.

¹⁶ Mu'allim, 1988: 437.

¹⁷ *ESE*, 1957: Annex 8.

¹⁸ Hudson, 1977; Seurat, 1980: 87-141; Mufti, 1996.

¹⁹ Makdisi, 1961; Sadowski, 1984: 115-202; Khoury, 1987: 624-626.

nascent modern industrial sector – were already in control of government when the French finally evacuated the country. Shukri al-Quwwatli who oversaw the conversion of their main organisation, the National Bloc (*al-Kutla al-wataniyya*),²⁰ into a political party under the name of the National Party (*al-Hizb al-watani*) had already been elected President of the Republic in 1943. While the achievement of independence unfettered by a treaty of alliance with the mandate holder or any other great power momentarily bolstered the nationalist credentials of the ruling elites, the *nakba*, the joint-Arab failure to forestall the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, shattered their legitimacy and the institutions they presided upon. In the absence of well established authoritative political structures and institutions, coup d'état appeared to be one of the principle means of political change in Syria until 1970.²¹

3.3. The Regime of Husni al-Za'im, March-August 1949

After months of political turmoil following Syria's poor performance in the 1948 war against Israel, the Syrian army led by its chief of staff General Husni al-Za'im deposed President Shukri al-Quwwatli and the parliamentary government in a bloodless coup d'état on 30 March 1949. Although shortly after the coup Za'im announced his intention to restore civil government as soon as possible, it soon became clear that he was an ambitious politician with grandiose plans who wanted to stay in power and leave his mark on Syrian political life. Dismissing the parliament that refused to legitimise his rule, banning newspapers and abolishing all political parties to stifle his opponents, getting himself elected President in a railroaded and rigged referendum, taking up the alliterative title of The Leader (*al-Za'im*) and investing himself with the rank of marshal, Za'im ruled Syria until August 14, when a group of army officers led by General Sami al-Hinnawi deposed and killed him.²²

This section will first examine early reactions to the coup and the question of external involvement in its preparation as well as Za'im's efforts to obtain recognition from the international community for his regime. Then the focus shifts to a series of critical agreements concluded or proposed in order to enlist foreign backing and mobilise

²⁰ The National Bloc, whose seeds went back to the late 1920s, was founded in a congress held in Homs in November 1932. Its charter is reproduced in Mu'allim, 1988: Appendix 5, 263-268.

²¹ In the twenty-year period following the first coup d'état that took place in 1949 Syria experienced seventeen army coups and ten of them were successful. Only four times did the officers who staged coups pass the power to civilians; Perlmutter, 1969: 827.

²² For a brief chronology of events during Za'im's short tenure, see Ziadeh, 1957: 101-103.

external resources to foster economic development as part of Za'im's failed drive to consolidate his regime. The chapter concludes with an in-depth analysis of the Syrian leader's short but eventful rule.

3.3.1 Early Reactions to the Coup and Overcoming the Hurdle of Recognition

The first military coup in Syria was not only supported by the army but was also greeted with widespread approval in the country. Thus, shortly after the coup, Syrians gathered in major cities to demonstrate their support and congratulatory telegrams were sent in their thousands.²³ Moreover, notwithstanding their subsequent disenchantment, the initial attitude of most of the political parties and prominent politicians tended towards expectant endorsement though some refused to co-operate and one party declared its active opposition.²⁴

As Tabitha Petran pointed, to the Arab Ba'th Party (*Hizb al-ba'th al-'arabi*), which had been founded in April 1947,²⁵ the coup 'heralded the dawn of a new age' and Michel 'Aflaq, a founding father and the principal ideologue of the party, sought to become Za'im's mentor.²⁶ Akram al-Hawrani, then the leader of the Youth Party (*Hizb al-shabab*) and a champion of the cause of the peasants,²⁷ backed Za'im whose commitment to agrarian reform was phrased in the slogan 'I come to liberate the peasants' and was in turn appointed legal adviser to the Defence Ministry.²⁸ The Aleppo based People's Party (*Hizb al-sha'b*), which was founded in August 1948 by former members of the National Bloc as a rival to the President Quwwatli's Damascus based National Party,²⁹ was divided in its stand: while some of its leaders such as Faydi al-Atasi worked with Za'im in the early days of the coup and tried to form a government, others led by Rushdi al-Kikhia and Nazim al-Qudsi refused to endorse the

²³ Carleton, 1950: 3-4; Fansa, 1982: 34-35; Mu'allim, 1985:105.

²⁴ For a general overview of Syrian political parties and movements, see Jabbur, 1993: 138-148.

²⁵ For the history of the Ba'th Party, its ideology and organisation, see Abu Jaber, 1966; Rouleau, 1969: 156-171; Attrache, 1973; Devlin, 1976; Carre, 1980: 185-224; Ghanim, 1994. For a work of a polemical nature, see Safadi, 1964.

²⁶ Petran, 1972: 97.

²⁷ By 1950, the name of Hawrani's party was changed into Arab Socialist Party (*al-Hizb al-'arabi al-ishtiraki*). In early 1953, this latter party merged with the Arab Ba'th Party to become the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party (*Hizb al-ba'th al-'arabi al-ishtiraki*). For his memoirs, see Hawrani, 2000. For a sympathetic work on Hawrani, see Hamdan, 1996. For a hostile account, see Safadi, 1964: 342 ff.

²⁸ Petran, 1972: 97.

²⁹ It should be noted that the People's Party in question is different from the one which bore the same name and formed in June 1925 under the leadership of 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar. See Khoury, 1987:141-147 and 623; Kayali, 1951: 280-283; Jabbur, 1993: 142-145 and 500-504.

unconstitutional change of regime and argued for the immediate return of the army to its barracks. However, a potential rupture was prevented by a party decision that left its members free on the question of participation in the government.³⁰ The Syrian Muslim Brothers (*al-Ikhwan al-muslimun*), which had been formed in 1944 out of one of the benevolent societies that had proliferated in the 1920s and 1930s,³¹ communicated its demands, including a call for the trial of those who brought ‘disasters and catastrophes’ to the country, in a statement issued on 7 April.³² On the other hand, the already outlawed Syrian Communist Party (*al-Hizb al-shuyu’i al-suri*)³³ publicly declared, by issuing statements and distributing leaflets, its immediate opposition to the coup.³⁴ Hence, during Za’im’s era, the ban on the party was maintained and its members were systematically persecuted.³⁵

In contrast to the widespread public welcome within Syria and the initial backing of quite a wide variety of the existing political parties, the international community hesitated to recognise the new regime. Therefore following the coup Za’im was confronted with the immediate task of obtaining international recognition. That despite the claims and revelations which implicated a variety of states, both near and far, in the encouragement and the preparation of the coup. Of these, the involvement of the USA’s CIA operatives in Damascus has been affirmed by subsequent disclosures,³⁶ the role of France has remained in the shadows,³⁷ whereas the assumed link with Great Britain has proved to be unsubstantiated by the unravelling of events.

³⁰ Fansa, 1982: 57; Arslan, 1994, 2: 810 and 815; Hawrani, 2000, 2: 952.

³¹ Batatu, 1982: 12-20; Khoury, 1987: 608-609.

³² For a list of the demands see Hawrani, 2000, 2: 972.

³³ The Syrian Communist Party (SCP) whose origins dated back to the 1920s was outlawed in the wake of the Soviet Union’s vote in favour of the partition of Palestine in the United Nations in December 1947. On the SCP see Nehme, 1985: 17-34; Ismael and Ismael, 1998.

³⁴ Petran, 1972: 98; Fansa, 1982: 156-157; Hawrani, 2000, 2: 972-973.

³⁵ Carleton, 1950: 8; Petran, 1972: 98.

³⁶ A former CIA agent Miles Copeland revealed that he and Stephen Meade, another CIA operative who acted as US assistant military attaché in Damascus, encouraged the Syrian Chief of Staff and got involved in the preparation of the coup. Their involvement was later confirmed to Douglas Little by Deane Hilton, the then chief aide to the US ambassador in Damascus and to Irene Gendzier by Wilbur Eveland, a former CIA agent in the Middle East. Copeland, 1969: 37- 44; Little, 1990: 56, note 29; Gendzier, 1997: 97-98. Andrew Rathmell, on the other hand, argues that without access to CIA archives, much of which remains classified, it would be impossible to determine precisely the role the US played before the coup and asserts that the State Department had little reason to be enthusiastic about the removal of ‘Azm government yet acknowledges that CIA operatives in Damascus had foreknowledge of Za’im’s plans and does not rule out the possibility that they may have given him some encouragement and advice. Rathmell, 1995: 36-44.

³⁷ Khalid al-‘Azm, the prime minister deposed by Za’im, hints in his memoirs that the French government had a hand in the coup and Elisabeth Picard assigns a shadowy role, ‘un rôle occult’, to France in Za’im’s seizure of power. See ‘Azm, 1973, 2: 95; Picard, 1980: 146-147.

Yet, at first eyes had turned to the neighbouring Jordan whose king 'Abdallah³⁸ had supposedly established a close association with Za'im prior to the coup.³⁹ Thus, it was initially thought that Za'im had acted in league with King 'Abdallah to promote his Greater Syria plan with British connivance.⁴⁰ Based on the resolution of the Syrian Congress of 1920, the Greater Syria plan aimed at the unification of Transjordan, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon into a constitutional monarchy with 'Abdallah as King and Damascus as capital. The Quwwatli regime overthrown by Za'im had strenuously rejected 'Abdallah's scheme and had also opposed the Fertile Crescent plan put forward by the rival Hashemite court in Baghdad that called for the political unification of geographical Syria as a first stage, and then its joining by Iraq to form the nucleus of a pan-Arab federation open to other Arab states. Instead of these far-reaching Hashemite unity schemes, Syria under Quwwatli's presidency had opted to become a founding member of the League of Arab States, an Egyptian proposed loose organisation which permitted participating states to preserve their sovereignty and political regimes.⁴¹

Although the exact nature of the relations between Za'im and King 'Abdallah prior to the 30 March coup has remained in obscurity, it is for certain that the removal of Quwwatli's regime elicited a favourable attitude in both Jordan and Iraq whose leaders sent emissaries to Damascus to take advantage of the new opening.⁴² The arrival of these envoys and subsequent negotiations provided an opportunity for Za'im to play one Arab centre against another in order to obtain recognition for his regime. He took the initiative by hinting that he favoured some sort of confederation between Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan.⁴³ He subsequently appealed to Baghdad for the immediate announcement of a military pact, not only to strengthen his country's position vis-à-vis Israel with which armistice talks had just started but equally importantly, and as noted

³⁸ Along with its independence in 1946, Transjordan was renamed Jordan and its ruler Amir 'Abdullah assumed the title of King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

³⁹ Faysal al-'Asali, the general secretary of the Socialist Co-operative Party (*Hizb al-ishtiraki al-ta'awuni*) and a deputy close to President Quwwatli, voiced the claim in the Syrian parliament on 17 March 1949 and demanded that Za'im be tried of high treason. Subsequently the army high command closed ranks and delivered a memorandum to the President. 'Azm, 1973, 2: 183-191; Van Dusen, 1971: 223; Mu'allim, 1985: 99; Hawrani, 2000, 1: 860.

⁴⁰ Carleton, 1950: 8; Rabinovich, 1991: 67 and 104; Shlaim, 1986: 70.

⁴¹ Kayali, 1951: 116-145 and 208-233; Seale, 1986: 5-15; Petran, 1972: 80-81; Porath, 1986; Pipes, 1990: 71-96; Mufti, 1996: 36-38.

⁴² Ziadeh, 1957: 101.

⁴³ *New York Times*, 8 April 1949.

by the Iraqi interlocutors, to get tacit recognition.⁴⁴ But rather than meeting the Syrian leader's expectations, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Sa'id came up with two counter proposals neither of which were accepted by the Syrian side. On 12 April his suggestion of a trilateral meeting of Iraqi, Jordanian and Syrian leaders was conveyed to the Syrian side and it was promptly turned down.⁴⁵ Four days later, Nuri al-Sa'id travelled to Damascus to press for an immediate Iraqi-Syrian bilateral union only to be rebuffed by watered-down proposals that would involve Lebanon too.⁴⁶ In a separate tract, Za'im's private secretary and brother-in-law Nazir Fansa was sent to Egypt and Saudi Arabia and on his return he reported that both countries were expecting Za'im to uphold Syria's independence against Hashemite expansionist designs and were ready to extend recognition and support.⁴⁷ Hence, it was after weeks of unionist posturing, accompanying manoeuvring and a personal visit by Za'im to Cairo that the new regime was finally recognised by Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon on 23 April.⁴⁸ Even Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister 'Adil Arslan, despite his resentment at being bypassed in dealings with Cairo which soon drew him to the point of resignation, noted in his diary entry that overcoming the hurdle of recognition was a 'brilliant political victory'.⁴⁹

On the other hand, Britain, France and the USA, the three Western countries which had also been suspected of being the instigators of the coup, waited in the wings while Za'im was endeavouring to obtain recognition from other Arab states. But on 27 April, only days after the way was cleared by the regional heavyweights such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the three Western states acted in concert and recognised the new regime in Damascus.⁵⁰

3.3.2 Attempts at Regime Consolidation

The first Syrian military intervention attracted extensive support but this initial favourable reception emanated from the immense disaffection felt towards the old regime. The fate or longevity of the new regime, however, was to be judged by its own

⁴⁴ Text of the Iraqi delegation's telegram to their Ministry of Defence, dated 12 April 1949, as reproduced in Fansa, 1983: 112-113.

⁴⁵ Arslan, 1994, 2: 814.

⁴⁶ Fansa, 1983: 48; Arslan, 1994, 2: 816; Mufti, 1996: 51.

⁴⁷ Fansa, 1983: 49-52; Seale, 1986: 52.

⁴⁸ *MEJ*, 'Chronology', 1949: 328; Seale, 1986: 52.

⁴⁹ Arslan, 1994, 2: 819.

⁵⁰ *MEJ*, 'Chronology', 1949: 328.

performance. In this respect although much has been written on Za'im's personal shortcomings and flaws in his character,⁵¹ both his determination to build up the Syrian army and his commitment to social reform, economic development and more prosperous society appear to be genuine. Thus, during his reign the size of the Syrian army was expanded nearly five-fold from 5,500 to 27,000 and it was re-equipped with arms purchased from France; Turkish assistance for its reorganisation was sought and a Turkish military mission led by a former Chief of the General Staff was received to accomplish this task; arrangements were also made to send junior military officers to Turkey and Egypt for training.⁵² Following the example set by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, Za'im endeavoured to separate religion and state. Syria under his rule became the first Arab country to grant the franchise to women;⁵³ the scope of the Muslim *shari'a* law was restricted by the substitution of a civil code drawn up in Egypt on the European models by a group of jurists eager for legal reform; and the private administration of family *waqfs*⁵⁴ was abolished to pave the way for agrarian reform. Moreover, a Directorate of Statistics was established and the Syrian (later Damascus) University, which had been established in 1923 by the addition of a college of Letters and Sciences to the Ottoman Schools of Law and Medicine, was reorganised on more Western lines. A commercial law was issued and the principle of progressive taxation was adopted with the declared aim of equitable taxation but undoubtedly increasing the revenues of the state was another motive.⁵⁵ These reforms and measures were highly significant and most of them survived their initiator. However, more radical action was needed to fulfil Za'im's ambitions.

Back in 1946, a British firm, Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners, had been contracted to study the country's economic resources and development potential. The report submitted to the Syrian government a year later included a list of the feasible projects,

⁵¹ Syria's first military ruler has often been portrayed as a mercurial, emotionally unstable, megalomaniac individual and as an opportunist, unideal politician who pursued power for its own sake and sought to reap its material benefits. See Be'eri, 1970: 58; Tibawi, 1969: 384; Seale, 1986: 61-63; Shlaim, 1986: 68-69; Ma'oz, 1995: 22. Although some or all of these charges might contain elements of the truth and might have played a part in his rapid downfall and immediate execution, they need not prevent us from examining his tenure.

⁵² Carleton, 1950: 5; *Gazette de Lausanne*, 1 July 1949; *Time*, 1 August 1949; Arslan, 1994, 2: 810ff; Hawrani, 2000, 2: 1019.

⁵³ Initially, this right depended on literacy, but within one year this restriction was also removed.

⁵⁴ *al-Awqaf al-dhuriya*, religious endowments whose revenues are allocated to the descendants of their founders.

⁵⁵ Carleton, 1950: 6; Kayali, 1951: 275, note 3; Seale, 1986: 58-63; Be'eri, 1970: 59; Fansa, 1983: 182-183; Hawrani, 2000, 2: 993.

underlined the necessity of additional detailed technical studies for some of these projects and recommended the immediate undertaking of the rest. At a time when government revenues totalled about SL125 million,⁵⁶ the British firm proposed a ten-year SL477 million public works draft plan.⁵⁷ However, due to the lack of funds, the plan had not been adopted and instead the civilian governments formed prior to Za'im's coup⁵⁸ had proceeded to tackle some small-scale projects such as the Khabur River Irrigation⁵⁹ whose cost was estimated at SL3.5 million or Madkh Swamp⁶⁰ whose cost was estimated at SL2 million.⁶¹ Yet the Gibb plan, although practically shelved, became a blueprint for the country's economic development.⁶²

Upon seizing power Za'im announced the immediate undertaking of some of the projects covered by the plan, such as the Latakia Harbour (SL28 million) and the Euphrates Water Project for Aleppo (SL28 million).⁶³ At the same time Za'im promised that the economy would not depend on taxes which strain industry and employers.⁶⁴ Recognising the scarcity of domestic resources Za'im tried to exploit external challenges and opportunities to acquire funds sufficient to implement the whole plan.

In the following few months a series of agreements with either the 'one foreign power to which one could not show partiality without weakening the nationalistic fervor of a quarter century of struggle against the Mandatory Power'⁶⁵ or with the oil companies of 'the concession-hunting imperialists'⁶⁶ or with the 'Zionist enemy'⁶⁷ were proposed or signed or ratified. As we shall see, apart from getting international backing for his regime, either the acquisition of external financial resources to foster economic

⁵⁶ SSA, 1950: 118-119.

⁵⁷ 'Ammari, 1964: 33

⁵⁸ In the post-independence three-year period leading to Za'im's coup, governments had been led by the following prime ministers: Sa'dallah al-Jabiri and Jamil Mardam, both from the National Party, and Khalid al-'Azm, an independent. See Jabbur, 1993: 58.

⁵⁹ Irrigation of an area up to 34,000 hectares (1 hectare=10,000 m²) with the waters of the Khabur River, an east bank tributary of the Euphrates.

⁶⁰ A project for drawing off water from the Queiq River -north of Aleppo- to irrigate some 15,000 hectares and the limitation of the swamp area flooded by the waters of the same river.

⁶¹ United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, 1949, Part I, Appendix IV: 89-95.

⁶² Petran, 1972: 88.

⁶³ Carleton, 1950: 6; Seale, 1986: 58-63; Tibawi, 1969: 384; Van Dusen, 1971: 106.

⁶⁴ Van Dusen, 1971: 208.

⁶⁵ Carleton, 1950: 8.

⁶⁶ Ibid.: 7.

⁶⁷ Shlaim, 1986: 72.

development or opening the way for the free exercise of legislation in financial matters for the same purpose was a central concern common to these agreements.

3.3.3 The Monetary Agreement with France

The first of these agreements dealt with outstanding monetary issues with France, the former mandatory power. Although Syria became formally independent in 1946, the French were left with control of the much of the monetary apparatus of their former mandate. Notably, the Syrian currency remained tied to the French franc and the larger part of the cover was in French francs. Moreover, the privileges of their firms operating in Syria were left untouched. Yet, in February 1949 protracted negotiations with the French government resulted in an agreement that severed the link between the lira and franc and granted Syria both the right of gradual liquidation of the franc balances and the right of legislation in matters concerning the concessions of the French firms.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the agreement encountered an intense parliamentary opposition and set off a wave of public indignation as it was viewed as a step towards reconciliation with the former mandatory power whose support for the partition of Palestine had added to the already existing strong feeling of bitterness against it.⁶⁹

Thus the agreement had been awaiting parliamentary ratification when Za'im seized power. Eager to obtain spare parts and new weapons for the French equipped Syrian army and financial assistance to promote economic development, Za'im disregarded anti-French feelings and ratified the much-debated agreement.⁷⁰ Criticised as a price paid for the recognition of his regime,⁷¹ the ratification of the agreement heralded a new era of understanding between Syria and France. Soon, upon the invitation of the French ambassador in Damascus, a military delegation was on its way to Paris to successfully conclude an arms deal⁷² and the bilateral relations were described as perfect by the Syrian leader.⁷³

Although this French-Syrian *rapprochement* was cut short by the downfall of the Syrian ruler, the monetary agreement had an enduring value of giving Syria the freedom to

⁶⁸ Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1951: 405-410; Barakat, 1954: 3; 'Azm, 1973, 2: 89-95.

⁶⁹ Kayali, 1951: 253-257; Picard, 1980: 145-147; Hawrani, 2000, 1: 874-876.

⁷⁰ Ziadeh, 1957: 105; Fansa, 1983: 94.

⁷¹ Mu'allim, 1985: 110.

⁷² Fansa, 1983: 95; Arslan, 1994, 2: 829ff.

⁷³ *Gazette de Lausanne*, 1 July 1949.

exercise the right of legislating in monetary matters. Among the most important of the laws issued subsequent to the agreement was a legislative decree which covered the basic monetary law and the establishment of the Syrian Central Bank.⁷⁴ Promulgated in March 1953, the decree was described as a ‘decisive step in the economic and monetary liberation of the country’, by George Shahin, then the Finance Minister.⁷⁵

3.3.4. Pipeline Agreements with Oil Companies

Another agreement that was stalled in the parliament prior to Za'im's coup concerned the laying of the largest crude oil pipeline of its time from oilfields in eastern Saudi Arabia to the Mediterranean over a distance of 1700 kilometres. The project had emerged in the late months of 1943 as a component of US government scheme to ensure continued post-war control of the Saudi oil. Following the failure of the proposals for direct US government ownership and an Anglo-American intergovernmental cartel due to the opposition of a formidable coalition of interests in the USA, another case pointing to the connectedness of domestic political economy and international political economy, the whole undertaking was left to a consortium of private American oil companies that was accorded State Department backing to implement.⁷⁶ As it happened, while the Arabian-American Oil Company (Aramco) was designated to build and operate the eastern part of the pipeline system up to Qaisumah in Saudi Arabia, Aramco's parent companies founded the Trans-Arabian Pipeline Company (Tapline) to build and operate the nearly 1210 kilometre-long western part extending from Qaisumah to the tanker loading terminal near Sidon in Lebanon. In fact, the pipeline was originally planned to run from Saudi Arabia to the port of Haifa in Palestine where there already had been a terminal facility for a pipeline from the Kirkuk oil fields in Iraq. However, the conflict in Palestine led Tapline to opt for a route that went across Jordan and the southeast corner of Syria (via the Golan Heights) to end at Sidon in Lebanon.⁷⁷

In September 1947 negotiations between Tapline and the Syrian government resulted in an agreement granting the company the right-of-way and exempting it from all taxes, fees and custom duties in return for an annual payment of a modest amount of

⁷⁴ Barakat, 1954: 3.

⁷⁵ Shahin as quoted in Heydemann, 1999: 68.

⁷⁶ Keohane, 1984: 150-159.

⁷⁷ Michaelis, 1951: 236; Vassiliev, 1995: 439. Tapline ultimately became a fully owned subsidiary of Aramco, whose sole ownership finally passed to the Saudi government in 1980. Presley and Westaway, 1989: 50; Farsy, 1990: 101-102.

\$300,000.⁷⁸ But the submission of the agreement to the Syrian parliament for ratification was delayed since critics were quick to link the agreement to US policy in Palestine. Moreover, demands were also raised for better financial terms. As the US vote in the United Nations in favour of partition in November 1947 and its decision to recognise the state of Israel in May 1948 fanned anti-American feelings that came into full view in violent demonstrations in Syria, plans to start work at both ends of the pipeline at about the same time were abandoned and construction proceeded exclusively in Saudi Arabia to assure Aramco operation. However, that was disquieting not only for Tapline and the US administration, but also for Saudi Arabia whose king was eager to increase oil revenues.⁷⁹ Under their combined pressure President Quwwatli got Prime Minister 'Azm to submit the agreement to the parliament on 18 February 1949 but failed to bring about its ratification while in power.⁸⁰ It appears that even 'Azm had reservations about the terms of the agreement as he shared the critics' view that the amount which would accrue to Syria was not compatible with the magnitude of the project and out of proportion to the benefits that would accrue to the other parties concerned. As he told Quwwatli, 'it is not fair for King 'Abd al-'Aziz to receive hundreds of millions of dollars each year while the share of Syria will not exceed a single million in a year.'⁸¹ Thus, heeding calls expressed in widespread demonstrations and symposiums either for its rejection or renegotiation to obtain more favourable terms, the members of the parliament consigned the agreement to a special committee where it remained bogged down until the 30 March coup.⁸²

Although Miles Copeland, who was to first to disclose that CIA had been involved in the staging of the coup, does not mention the Trans-Arabian pipeline agreement, subsequent revelations leave not doubt that CIA operatives in the American embassy in Damascus encouraged and supported Za'im in his bid for power to ensure the ratification of the agreement.⁸³ Once in power the Syrian army chief did not disappoint them. Despite the discussion of a report by Minister of Public Works Fathallah Saqqal that called for the revision of the agreement to obtain more favourable terms in a four-

⁷⁸ Franck, 1949: 206. A thorough analysis of the agreement undertaken by Za'im's minister of public works, Fathallah Saqqal, is in Mu'allim, 1985, Document No. 14: 320-330.

⁷⁹ Kayali, 1951: 243; Little, 1990: 52-55; Jabbur, 1993: 306; Gendzier, 1997: 97-98.

⁸⁰ 'Azm, 1973, 2: 93; Hawrani, 2000, 1: 838.

⁸¹ 'Azm, 1973, 2: 94.

⁸² 'Azm, 1973, 2: 94; Hawrani, 2000, 1: 872-874.

⁸³ See footnote 36.

hour meeting,⁸⁴ Za'im got his cabinet ratify the agreement unanimously on 16 May.⁸⁵ Yet, apart from the Syrian leader's desire to get the backing of the US for his rule, the promise of an interest-free \$6 million loan by Saudi Arabia,⁸⁶ made at a time when the kingdom itself was incurring endemic budget deficits,⁸⁷ emerges as a tempting inducement too. But Za'im's rule did not last long enough either to get the Saudi loan or to see the tricking of oil through the pipeline. Work on the western section of the pipeline started after the deposition of Za'im and was completed in by the end of 1950 at a cost of over \$230 million.⁸⁸ Until the ceasing of oil transportation in the section beyond Jordan in 1976 due mainly to the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights through which the pipeline passed, successive governments pressed Tapline to increase its transit payments. They succeeded on one occasion but given the shortness of the section traversing Syria and the fact that payments by the company had to be divided between the four host states by taking into account the proportion of the pipeline in each, the contribution of the revenues from the line to the Syrian treasury, as we shall see in the subsequent chapters, remained rather limited.

What proved to be much more lucrative in the long-run were the agreements with the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) which were ratified nearly a month after that of Tapline. These agreements provided for the laying of a pipeline system and the building of a sea terminal at Banias on the Syrian coast to convey Iraqi oil to the Mediterranean. Actually, the IPC which was jointly owned, except for five percent of its holdings, in equal parts by British, British-Dutch, French, and American oil companies,⁸⁹ had already completed a pipeline system to carry oil from its oilfields in Kirkuk in northern Iraq to terminals on the Mediterranean in 1934. The northern branch of this system, with its capacity of 8 million tons a year, ran through Syria to Tripoli in Lebanon while the southern branch ran through Transjordan to Haifa in what then was Palestine. The need for a new pipeline to cross Syria came into being in the aftermath of the decision

⁸⁴ Mu'allim, 1985: 111.

⁸⁵ *New York Times*, 17 May 1949 and 18 May 1949; Arslan, 1994, 2: 833.

⁸⁶ Holden and Johns, 1981: 148; Vassiliev, 1995: 440.

⁸⁷ Holden and Johns, 1981: 150-158; Safran, 1988: 61.

⁸⁸ *Time*, 20 November 1950; Michaelis, 1951: 236; Vassiliev, 1995: 440.

⁸⁹ From the late 1920s until its nationalisation in 1972 the IPC was jointly owned by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which later became Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and then BP, (23.75 per cent); Royal Dutch-Shell (23.75 per cent); Compagnie Française des Pétroles, which later became Total, (23.75 per cent); Near East Development Corporation, whose shares were equally held by Standard Oil of New Jersey, later became Esso and then Exxon, and Standard Oil of New York, later became Socony-Vacuum and then Mobil, (23.75 per cent); and Gulbenkian (5 per cent). For an early overview, see Loftus, 1948.

of the Iraqi government to close the southern branch of the pipeline system in deference to the economic boycott which was declared by the Council of Arab League against the state of Israel.⁹⁰ The original agreements between the IPC and the transit countries, concluded in 1931, were a legacy of the mandate period and as such provided for the payment of not more than token amounts.⁹¹ Thus, annual budgeted pipeline revenues were set at less than one-third of a million Syrian liras for the three years that followed the Second World War.⁹² In contrast, the agreements of 1949 provided for annual transit fees based on the amount of oil transported, payments for the protection of the line and for agreed amounts of crude oil for domestic consumption to be supplied at world prices.⁹³ The 895 kilometre-long Kirkuk-Banias pipeline was designed to convey 14.5 million tons of crude oil in a year, laid down in seventeen months at a cost of some £45 million and opened in November 1952.⁹⁴ However, as increases in the estimates of budgeted revenues indicate, Syria started to benefit from the agreements before the completion of the line to Banias. Therefore, the combined budgeted transit revenues from the IPC and the Tapline averaged about SL5.5 million in the 1950-1954 five-year period, an amount equivalent to nearly 3 percent of government revenues in a given year in that period.⁹⁵ Yet, when combined with the spending for the construction of the pipelines, the estimated revenues accruing to the Syrian economy as a whole were much higher. For example, these revenues were estimated at SL45 million and SL55 million or about 17 and 19 percent of the export earnings for the years 1950 and 1951 respectively.⁹⁶

In sum, while the whole Middle East began to assume a strategic value in the world chessboard in the post-World War II period due to the increasing importance of oil for the global economy, oil-poor Syria was drawn in to the game becoming eligible for location rent throughout the process. It was left to subsequent governments to use their bargaining position, which gained strength especially after the laying of the pipelines, to drive up their transit revenues. Although the matter will be followed up in the subsequent chapters, suffice here to add that until the nationalisation of the IPC by the

⁹⁰ Kayali, 1951: 241.

⁹¹ ASBP, 1966: 2-5; Penrose and Penrose, 1978: 390.

⁹² SSA, 1955: 234-235.

⁹³ Mu'allim, 1985: 111-112.

⁹⁴ *New York Times*, 17 November 1952.

⁹⁵ SSA, 1955: 234-235.

⁹⁶ MEE, September 1952: 1.

Iraqi government in 1972, total oil transit payments from the IPC, and also from Tapline which were on a smaller scale, to the Syrian treasury surpassed, after subsequent revisions of the agreements and increases in throughput capacity, the equivalent of more than SL2,000 million (roughly \$550 million) in foreign exchange, an amount almost equal to one-fifth of the total value of all registered exports in the same period.⁹⁷

3.3.5. Syrian-Israeli Armistice Agreement and the Peace Offer

In the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan entered into United Nations sponsored bilateral armistice negotiations with Israel as called under the UN Security Council resolution of 16 November 1948. These negotiations started on the Greek island of Rhodes in the first half of January 1949 and produced three separate armistice agreements by the end of the first week of April.⁹⁸ Syria, whose army had managed to hold on to a small but strategically salient series of land west of the international border, avoided the Rhodes talks altogether but this intransigence did not last long. As the conclusion of agreements one after another between Israel and three of its Arab neighbours was leaving Syria alone with the prospect of facing the full might of the victorious Israeli army, Prime Minister 'Azm called for a closed session of the parliament and obtained a mandate to negotiate a limited military agreement with the Jewish state. But his government was toppled before the start of the scheduled talks.⁹⁹

In less than a week after Za'im's coup, armistice negotiations between Syria and Israel were opened under the UN auspices in the no-man's land on the Syrian-Israeli border on 5 April. During the negotiations that lasted three and a half months, thirteen plenary sessions as well as three meetings of a mixed military sub-commission and three meetings of a mixed formulations committee were held. Syria was represented by a military delegation that was led by Colonel Fawzi Selo who was assisted by Salah al-Din al-Tarazi of the Foreign Ministry. The discussions were chaired by Henri Vigier, personal representative of the UN mediator Bunche, and General William Riley, the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNSTO) chief of staff.¹⁰⁰ After the start of these

⁹⁷ SSA, various issues between 1951-1971. For the post-1972 period, see Kienle, 1990: 66ff.

⁹⁸ The armistice agreements between Israel and Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan were concluded on 24 February, 23 March and 3 April 1949 respectively. *Middle East Journal*, 'Chronology', 1949: 181 and 315.

⁹⁹ 'Azm, 1973, 1: 379-380; Hawrani, 2000, 1: 855-856; Yaniv, 1986: 160-161.

¹⁰⁰ Fansa, 1982: 170; Arslan, 1994, 2: 829-830; Moore, 1994: 61.

negotiations, Syria and Israel also took part in the Lausanne Conference organised by the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC) which was assigned the duty of assisting the concerned parties to achieve a final and comprehensive settlement.

In what could be considered as one his boldest decisions during his short reign, Za'im proposed to skip the armistice talks altogether and proceed to the conclusion of a full peace treaty with Israel which would include an immediate exchange of ambassadors, open borders and normal economic relations. Moreover, he offered to resettle 300,000 of the total of 700,000 or 800,000 Palestinian refugees displaced by the 1948 war in the Jazira region in northern Syria as part of a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict provided that the refugees were compensated for their losses and Israel agreed to make territorial concessions giving Syria a better access to the region's water resources. Subsequently, upon receiving a negative response from the Israelis, Za'im went further and called for a meeting between himself and the Israel's prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, to discuss the peace proposal. But the Israeli leader refused to meet Za'im as long as Syrian forces remained on the territories they had occupied during the 1948 war.¹⁰¹ According to his diary, Ben-Gurion did not only give a negative answer but he also contemplated expelling the Syrians by force.¹⁰²

From the Syrian point of view, a peace agreement that would leave them with some territory west of the international border would be a remarkable accomplishment and avert, though perhaps only partially, potential criticisms at home and in the region. In addition, such an arrangement would give Syria a better hold over the region's scarce water resources; namely the Jordan River and Lake Tiberias. The Israelis, who had already concluded armistice agreements with Egypt and Lebanon on the basis of the international border, thought that the same line should also be followed when they were

¹⁰¹ The Syrian sources used in this study provide only scanty or no first-hand information about the Syrian peace offer. The details have been brought to light by Israeli scholars who integrated the source material which became available in the 1980s after the declassification of the relevant documents in the Israeli, American, British and French archives to the documents and scholarly work that had been available. Therefore, while an attempt is made in this study to incorporate what has been provided by Syrian historiography, details of the offer is mainly based on the relevant work of Israeli scholars who have dealt with the episode. Key accounts are Shlaim, 1986; Pappé, 1992; Rabinovich, 1991; Ma'oz, 1995. For an overview that is also greatly based on Israeli sources, see Hawrani, 2000, 2: pp. 957-963. For an early synopsis, see *New York Times*, 19 August 1949.

¹⁰² Rabinovich, 1991: 69. Indeed, just after the start of the armistice talks and in violation of the truce between the parties, Israeli forces occupied a point about a quarter-mile inside the Syrian frontier but were ordered to withdraw within days following the delivery of a strong note to the Israeli government by Bunche, the UN mediator. *New York Times*, 8 April 1949.

at a disadvantage. Ever aware of the importance of water resources, they also did not want to concede any point to Syria in such a strategic issue. It can be said that, the feeling that there was no need to make any concessions on important issues such as territory and water outweighed the benefits of a peace agreement especially when Israel enjoyed an overwhelming military advantage over Syria.

While the Syrian peace offer was directly conveyed to the Israeli representatives Lieutenant-Colonel Mordechai Makleff and Yehoshua Palmon in an informal conversation during the armistice talks, it was also discussed with the UN officials that were engaged in the armistice talks and Western diplomats in Damascus whose governments were eager to find a comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁰³ Thus, bewildered by Ben-Gurion's refusal to meet the Syrian leader, the UN mediator Bunche and the American administration tried, in vain, to exert pressure on the Israeli government. Yet, Ben-Gurion's fixation on the territorial question led to the suspension of armistice talks for a month. Za'im was not the only one to lay the blame on Israel. According to the U.S. ambassador in Damascus:¹⁰⁴

Everyone who has discussed that matter with Za'im is impressed by his sincerity and broadminded attitude towards Israel (far cry from stubborn intransigence previous Syrian Government) but his ardour is cooling in the face of evident Israeli insatiability. While Za'im is at least trying to measure up to Kemal Atatürk's stature and is susceptible to moderating influence, it is unfortunately becoming increasingly evident that Ben-Gurion is no Venizelos.¹⁰⁵ Yet unless Israel can be brought to understand that it cannot have all of its cake (partition boundaries) and gravy as well (areas captured in violation of truce, Jerusalem and resettlement of Arab refugees elsewhere) it may find that it won Palestine war but lost peace.

It is vital to add that Za'im's preference of a negotiated settlement with Israel and the reformist nature of the new regime neatly dovetailed with the two main themes in the United States' Middle Eastern policy: a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict

¹⁰³ Shlaim, 1986: 73; Rabinovich, 1991: 69-70; Ma'oz, 1995: 22-23.

¹⁰⁴ Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), Vol. 6, 1949: 1031-32 as quoted in Shlaim, 1986: 74-75.

¹⁰⁵ Despite the existence of a deep-rooted rivalry and the bitter memory of a three-year war from 1919 to 1922, Atatürk of Turkey and Eleutherios Venizelos of Greece led their respective countries into a process of reconciliation and concluded a treaty of friendship in 1930 that settled the outstanding boundary and population exchange problems. See Zürcher, 1997: 210; Armaoğlu, 1989: 186-187.

that was souring relations between the West and the Arab states and encouraging reforms and economic development in order to prevent domestic upheavals in the region. This American policy was directly related to the underlying concern that instability in the Middle East could help the Soviet Union foster an ambition to set a foothold and acquire influence in the oil-rich region. The American administration's conviction that the refugee problem was the major stumbling block to settling the Arab-Israeli conflict led them to prepare a plan based on the premise that vast development projects throughout the Middle East and especially in Israel and its Arab neighbouring states could induce the parties to the conflict to settle the refugee problem. Named after George McGhee, Assistant Secretary of State in charge of Near Eastern and African Affairs, and announced in April 1949, it was a kind of 'Middle Eastern Marshall Plan' which hoped to persuade Israel to repatriate around 200,000 refugees and induce other Arab states to resettle the remaining 550,000 as part of an impressive regional development project. It also included the necessary mechanism to raise more than \$100 million for the project and placed the PCC in charge of its execution.¹⁰⁶ Za'im's willingness to resettle around a quarter million Palestinian refugees in Syria, without any doubt, increased the realisation chances of the McGee plan and contributed to Truman administration's positive attitude towards his regime.

Alongside the US, Britain and France took Za'im's offer seriously and promised funds if and when Za'im agreed to make a public declaration.¹⁰⁷ As a matter of fact and perhaps to fulfil this condition, the Syrian leader made his ideas public in an interview with Richard Didier of the Swiss newspaper, *Gazette de Lausanne*, on 1 July 1949.¹⁰⁸ Significantly, in addition to his espousal of a peace treaty with Israel in unambiguous terms, he referred to the US as a friendly power and expressed his hope that the US would help Syria in its reconstruction and to return to its rightful place in the Middle East. With regard to the US aid, Za'im expounded that Syria had not officially applied to be a beneficiary of the Marshall Plan but that they would be pleased to be among the beneficiary countries if the US wanted to include them in the plan.

In a bid to push the US to action, the Syrian leader did summon the American ambassador within two weeks of giving the interview to the Swiss newspaper.

¹⁰⁶ *New York Times*, 12 June 1949; Pappé, 1992: 220.

¹⁰⁷ Pappé, 1992: 227.

¹⁰⁸ *Gazette de Lausanne*, 1 July 1949.

Presenting the refugee issue as the crux of problem and briefing Keeley on various Syrian economic development projects for which detailed studies had already been made, Za'im asked for funds and technical assistance in order to absorb refugee labour. After explaining that he could not take the initiative because it could cause a backlash at home, Za'im promised his full and complete cooperation if the US would take the lead. As Shlaim wrote, 'to Keeley, Za'im's sincerity was beyond question, if for no other reason than his awareness that the problems spawned by the Palestine conflict stood in the way of realizing many of his dreams. Keeley and his colleagues were also of the opinion that it was in the interest of peace in the Middle East to capitalize on Za'im's cooperativeness by recognizing the delicacy of his position and by giving him encouragement, support and technical assistance.'¹⁰⁹

Still, a successful application of McGhee plan did not only require Arab states' acceptance of resettlement of refugees within the limits of their absorptive capacity but also an Israeli acceptance of the principle of repatriation to open the way for the return of 200,000 Palestinian refugees. However, the government of Israel disclaimed any responsibility for the creation of the refugee problem and strongly rejected the charge that Palestinians were forcibly driven out by Israeli authorities. Their thesis stated that the question of return could not be separated from its military context and as long as the state of war continued the refugees would be a disruptive element in the maintenance of internal law and order and a formidable fifth column for external enemies. Although they stated that they were willing to assist in solving the problem on humanitarian grounds, they also asserted that any solution to the question should never jeopardise Israel's security. In practice, however, as back as June 1949, irreversible measures with regard to the refugees' property and lands were taken to block their return. As the Israeli Foreign Minister had declared, Israeli refusal to discuss repatriation was irreversible.¹¹⁰ At the end of the 1948 War, the forum to find a comprehensive solution to the Arab Israeli conflict, as it has been mentioned above, was the Lausanne conference. As argued by a 'new historian', Prime Minister Ben-Gurion did not view Lausanne as a peace conference but as a necessary evil and participated in it for tactical reasons only,

¹⁰⁹ *FRUS*, vol. 6, 1949, pp. 1226-1228 as quoted in Shlaim, 1986: 78 and Rabinovich, 1991: 91.

¹¹⁰ Later during the Lausanne conference and subsequently in the negotiations on the refugee question in 1950-1951, the Israeli Foreign Minister developed a more conciliatory approach offering to accept the return of 100,000 refugees, including those who had already returned (25,000) and the members of divided families (10,000), or arguing for the need to compensate the refugees as a prerequisite for solving the conflict. Pappé, 1992: 213-214.

condemning the conference to failure even before it had started.¹¹¹ As one rather sympathetic Israeli scholar explained, Ben-Gurion did not consider peace that would entail making concessions either on the territorial or the refugee fronts as a high priority. Instead, he was content to obtain armistice agreements and thought that they would provide Israel enough time to deal with ‘more important matters’ such as the absorption of the new Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe and the Arab countries and moulding a cohesive nation-state.¹¹² The participation of a Syrian delegation in the Lausanne Conference at the end of June and Syria’s agreement to enter into peace talks did not have any substantial impact on the road to progress and the whole conference turned out to be an exercise in futility.¹¹³

In the meantime, the UN mediators tried to arrange a meeting between the Syrian Foreign Minister ‘Adil Arslan and his Israeli counterpart Moshe Sharett, who regarded the Syrian peace offer worthy of pursuing. But Arslan refused to meet Sharett or permit any official from his ministry to participate in such a meeting since he saw it as part of a larger plot to get Syria recognise the new Jewish state and free its army so that it could occupy old Jerusalem.¹¹⁴

At the end, rather than a ground-breaking full peace treaty, an armistice agreement between Syria and Israel was signed on 20 July 1949 on the basis of a compromise solution suggested by UN mediator Ralph Bunche.¹¹⁵ As the agreement stipulated, Syrian forces evacuated the areas west of the international border and these areas together with some adjacent Israeli occupied land were made into a demilitarised zone (DMZ). A Mixed Armistice Commission under a United Nations chairman was also formed to supervise the execution of the agreement.¹¹⁶ Since the agreement rather

¹¹¹ Ibid.: 232-233.

¹¹² Ma’oz, 1995: 25.

¹¹³ The head of the delegation was the Syrian ambassador in Paris, ‘Adnan al-Atasi, the son of Hashim al-Atasi, a President of the Syrian Republic during the mandate years. Ambassador Atasi, though approached by the Israelis, kept his distance, an indication that he was either kept in dark about the peace offer or that did not want to get involved in it. Hawrani, 2000, 2: 962.

¹¹⁴ Arslan, 1994, 2: 841-847.

¹¹⁵ Bunche received the 1950 Nobel Peace Prize for his mediation in the conclusion of armistice agreements between Israel and its four neighbouring Arab states.

¹¹⁶ The text of the agreement is reproduced in Murad, 1989: 583-586. For an attempt to derive a template for a Syrian-Israeli peace settlement from the Israeli-Syrian General Armistice Agreement (July 20, 1949), the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces (May 31, 1974) and the Treaty of Peace between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the State of Israel (March 26, 1979), see Moore, 1994.

pragmatically omitted the issue of sovereign rights over these areas and since neither side would forfeit its claim, the DMZ became as Avner Yaniv put it 'a festering wound, a constant source of contention'¹¹⁷ until events during the Six-Day War and particularly Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights rendered them irrelevant.

Za'im's enthusiasm for a peace agreement dwindled following the signing of the armistice agreement. Although he never gave up speaking to American and French diplomats and to UN mediators about his willingness to reach a final agreement with Israel, he sounded more reserved and less hopeful.¹¹⁸ He could also see that the prospect of obtaining international financial aid by offering a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict was fading and began to search for alternative ways. In early August he told an interviewer that he was willing to take the leading role in the formation of a Middle East defence pact against communism to be patterned on the North Atlantic Pact (NATO),¹¹⁹ if the United States would pledge economic and military aid.¹²⁰ By the same token, during the farewell visit paid to him by Major Stephen Meade, the CIA operative working as the assistant military attaché in the US legation in Damascus, Za'im stated that he was planning to ask the United States for a loan of \$100 million to be strictly allocated to his economic and social program. In return he promised that he would grant air bases in Syria if the US government wished to make a formal request.¹²¹ But these initiatives came too late, only few days later, on 14 August 1949, Za'im was overthrown and executed, together with Prime Minister Muhsin al-Barazi, in a military coup led by General Sami Hinnawi.

By that time Za'im had sidelined all major political parties and lost the support of their leaders. He had also had alienated many of his military colleagues through purges and transfers. But the political act that contributed most to his violent end was his betrayal of Antun Sa'ada, the leader of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (*al-Hizb al-suri al-qawmi al-ijtima'i*) known also as the *Party Populaire Syrien*.¹²² Sa'ada fled to Syria in

¹¹⁷ Yaniv, 1986: 161. See also Khouri, 1963; Khouri, 1966.

¹¹⁸ Rabinovich, 1991: 79.

¹¹⁹ NATO was created on 4 April 1949.

¹²⁰ *New York Times*, 10 August 1949.

¹²¹ Meade's memorandum to the charge d'affaires, 11 August 1949 as quoted in Rabinovich, 1991: 91.

¹²² The Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) began as a secret organisation in 1932 under Sa'ada's leadership and was particularly active in Syria and Lebanon. Advocating a geographically based nationalism and rejecting the ideas of pan-Arabism, the party worked for the establishment of a secular

June 1949 after an abortive coup in Lebanon. Za'im gave him refugee at first but subsequently turned him over to the Lebanese authorities who had him tried and executed within twenty-four hours. Seen as a breach of the Arab tradition of hospitality and asylum and also as a violation of modern international practice regarding political refugees, the incident caused widespread outrage well beyond the ranks of the SSNP and weakened Za'im's standing with some of his supporters and as well as with other Arab governments. On the night of the coup that put an end to his regime, the Syrian leader was arrested and led to a firing squad by officers avenging Sa'ada.¹²³

3.4. Conclusion

Immediately after deposing the old regime led by President Quwwatli in a bloodless coup d'état, Chief of Staff Husni al-Za'im came to hold the reigns of power in his hands and as such he may well be singled out as the paramount decision maker. While in power, Za'im distinguished himself as an ambitious and flamboyant leader who strove to restore the prestige of the army, implement social reform and procure external resources to foster economic development in order to consolidate his regime.

Despite the prevalent idiosyncratic nature of decision-making, there was an unmistakable continuity with regard to the issues that had to be tackled during Za'im's reign. Almost as soon as the coup was perpetrated, the new leadership had to take a stance towards Arab unity schemes such as the Fertile Crescent and Greater Syria Plans advocated by Hashemite courts in Baghdad and Amman. Moreover, the form of relations with the neighbouring nascent Israeli state that entrenched itself in the greater part of Palestine in general and the issue of armistice talks with it in particular; the pipeline agreements that were bound to affect relations with the oil-rich neighbours or with the other neighbouring transit countries that were eager to raise their revenues as well as relations with the Western governments which had direct or indirect stakes in the concerned oil companies; or the pending monetary agreement whose fate could determine the nature of relations with the former mandatory power, these all, called for the immediate attention of the new rulers as they had done during the previous regime.

and totalitarian 'Greater Syria' that incorporated Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Transjordan, Sinai, Iraq and Cyprus. Karpas 1968: 87; Jabbur, 1993: 140.

¹²³ *New York Times*, 10 August 1949; Be'eri, 1970: 58-59; Fansa, 1982: 85-87; Hawrani, 2000, 2: 998-1002. Riyad al-Sulh, the Lebanese premier at the time of Sa'ada's death, was also assassinated by an SSNP member in 1951. See Petran, 1987: 42.

Za'im's approach to these burning issues reflected his eagerness to enlist foreign support and mobilise external resource for his regime. Yet, before anything else, winning international legitimacy became the initial foreign policy preoccupation since the international community hesitated to recognize a regime change that had been brought about through unconstitutional means. In his attempt to obtain international recognition, Za'im raised the idea of Arab unity at first. But his approach towards pan-Arabism was evidently pragmatic and devoid of ideological enthusiasm: once playing on the rivalry between the Hashemite courts in Baghdad and Amman on the one hand and Saudi Arabia and Egypt on the other paid its dividend in the form of sought after recognition of his regime by the latter two regional powers, Za'im embarked on a 'Syria first' policy that was based on the principle of the preservation of the young republic's independent and sovereign status as Quwwatli regime had done before him.

By not shying away from the ratification of the pipeline agreements that provided for the conveying of crude oil from Saudi and Iraqi oilfields to the Mediterranean, Za'im manifested a certain willingness to come to terms with the interests of Western oil cartels that were backed by their respective governments and the neighbouring Arab states that endeavoured to increase their oil revenues. Underlining the country's strategic location in the oil-rich Middle East, these very agreements were also instrumental in embedding Syria to the rent circuit as a transit state.

The *rapprochement* ensuing the ratification of the monetary agreement with France, the former mandatory power, opened the way for the purchase of French weaponry for the Syrian army which was undergoing a major expansion while assistance for its reorganisation was received from Turkey whose leaders were all too happy to see a regime that was inclined to cast aside the problematic issue of Alexandretta (Hatay).

In his bid to procure the funds needed to bolster his shaky regime, Za'im formulated or adopted proposals that were in harmony with the Western and particularly US sponsored plans that aimed at the peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In a similar vein, he was prepared to accept Western perceptions of threat and go as far as offering to provide military air bases to be used to 'contain' the Soviet Union. The peace offer to Israel and willingness to resettle 300,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria is

best understood in this context. It appears that, at least in Za'im's mind, there was a clear linkage between the McGhee plan and the offer to resettle the refugees. Za'im contemplated that helping to solve the thorniest refugee problem and contributing to the comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict would not only remove the destabilising question of Israel from Syrian politics but would also provide the funds and technical assistance for building infrastructure, extending the area under cultivation, modernising the agriculture and raising the living standards throughout Syria. His willingness to take a leading role in the creation of a some sort of Middle East defence system based on alliance with the Western powers in return for economic and military aid or his plan to ask for a loan of \$100 million from the US to be strictly used for his economic and social program, when his peace and resettlement offers failed largely due to Israel's uncompromising attitude towards repatriation of refugees and its preoccupation with the territorial issue, further prove that a main concern in Za'im's foreign policy making was attracting external resources for economic development of Syria and building up its army. He was, it seems, ready to breach the norms of Arabism against a separate peace with Israel or entering some sort of military alliance with the Western powers if the returns were worth such undertakings.

Za'im's sorry end indicated that his successors would be occupied with many of the issues he encountered during his brief rule. Therefore, the fate of his acts and policies will be among the themes to be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Economic Growth amidst Political Instability

August 1949-March 1954

4.1. Introduction

The rulers of the period resorted to a diverse set of policy measures and instruments and constructed institutions to foster national economic development. While the state emerged as a direct manager of some economic enterprises and undertakings in this process, its role as a regulator and promoter of private economic activity was also substantially reinforced. All these require consideration for two main reasons. Firstly, the extent of state intervention in the economy may be taken as a measure of state leadership's commitment to economic development. Without such a commitment, it would be hard to argue that economic needs are a fundamental source of a given state's foreign policy. Secondly, state involvement in the economy has implications for the resource base of the state. Thus while concentrating on the expanding role of the state, this study will also demonstrate that Syria lacked the resources to make the badly needed improvements in its infrastructure. It is the very existence of a resource gap and a shortfall in foreign exchange earnings which makes the acquisition of foreign resources for economic development a key foreign policy objective in an underdeveloped country. Therefore, the various forms of state intervention in the economy and the concomitant indicators of change such as foreign trade and balance of payment figures as well as central government receipts and expenditures will be examined in the course of this chapter.

The main questions that will be answered through this chapter are as follows: How was the Syrian economy performing? Were there bottlenecks that impeded its development? Did Syria have a resource gap or could it rely on its own means? Did Syria have the institutions and macroeconomic policy tools to regulate its economy? Did Syria need public investment in development projects? How could these projects be financed? Did the international environment create opportunities? Could external financing create dilemmas or trade-offs?

On the other hand, in my consideration of the Hinnawi interlude, I would like to demonstrate that while the People's Party which became the dominate political force in the aftermath of the coup that overthrew Za'im tended to sacrifice independence of the state and support unity with Iraq as a solution to Syria's structural political and economic problems, the subsequent regimes that were moulded by Colonel Shishakli, either from behind the scenes as it happened following his first and Syria's third coup in December 1949 or more openly after his second coup in November 1951, sought to implement socio-economic reform and procure foreign financial aid and technical assistance in order to realise a breakthrough in economic development. However, as we shall see the advocates of these diverging paths failed to achieve their objectives as they could not overcome the resistance to their policies.

This chapter opens with the examination of the immediate post-coup period and addresses the way the new rulers dealt with the legacy of the Za'im regime and the questions of foreign involvement and recognition by the international community. It then turns to the explication of the question of the unity with Iraq and the pro-unity stance of the People's Party whose ascendance was cut short by Shishakli's first coup. The following overview of the indirect and direct rule of Shishakli includes a consideration of attempts at regime consolidation and legitimisation through socio-economic reform implementation and placing the regime on a constitutional foundation. The subsequent section presents a detailed account of the expanding role of the state in the economy and the attendant indicators of change before shifting the focus on the quest for financial resources required to accomplish the objectives set by the regime leadership. Finally, an account of the events that led to the end of Shishakli's rule is followed by an evaluation of the period covered in this chapter.

4.2. Hinnawi's Interlude, August 1949-December 1949

The leader of the August military coup General Hinnawi installed himself as chief of the armed forces and assumed the chairmanship of the eleven-man 'Supreme War Council' (*al-Majlis al-harbi al-a'la*) whose formation was announced on the day of the coup.¹ In their first communiqué these officers claimed to have acted to put an end to Za'im's tyrannical rule and promised to leave the administration of the country to its civilian

¹ Mu'allim, 1985: 119; Hamdan, 1996: 81; Hawrani, 2000, 2: 1007.

leaders.² Within a couple of days and after a series of meetings between the leaders of the coup and a group of civilian politicians and among the latter themselves, legislative and executive powers were handed over to a provisional cabinet formed under venerable Hashim al-Atasi.³ While the People's Party, which was strongly backed by General Hinnawi, received the key posts such as the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Economy as well as a Ministry of State in the twelve-man cabinet, the National Party was represented only by 'Adil al-'Azma, Minister of State. Other members of the cabinet included 'Azm as Minister of Finance, Hawrani as Minister of Agriculture, and the Ba'th leader 'Aflaq as Minister of Education. The only military officer in the cabinet was Minister of Defence General 'Abdallah 'Atfa, who retained, due to his timely switch of sides, the same portfolio he had been given by Za'im.

Once the new cabinet met, it promptly addressed the question of what do with the acts of the Za'im regime.⁴ Among the most important of these acts were Za'im's unconstitutional dismissal of the executive and legislative organs of the Quwwatli era, his reform measures including the commercial and civil codes and the abolishment of the private administration of family wakfs as well as the agreements with international oil companies or with other states. Consequently Prime Minister Atasi announced that his government would neither confirm nor deny the actions of the Za'im regime and leave the matter to the future parliament.⁵

Yet, the very notion of a future parliament pointed towards the real inclination of the new rulers who would never revoke the slain ruler's acts nor refer them to such a parliament. A combination of considerations illustrating the fusion of internal and external factors lay behind the Atasi government's decision not to opt for revocation. First of all, the People's Party, the Ba'th and Hawrani had insisted that the previous parliamentary elections had been fraudulent and had campaigned persistently against the Quwwatli regime as corrupt.⁶ Thus the cabinet dominated by them wanted to block both

² For excerpts from the text of the communiqué, see Mu'allim, 1985: 117-118; Hawrani, 2000, 2: 1006-1007.

³ For the list of the main participants, the details of the meetings, the composition of Atasi government and the text of its policy statement, see Mu'allim, 1985, Document No. 15: 331-334.

⁴ 'Azm, 1973, 2: 209; Hawrani, 2000, 2: 1014-1015.

⁵ *New York Times*, 17 August 1949.

⁶ See *New York Times*, 16 August 1949; Devlin, 1976: 48-52; Hawrani, 2000, 1: 833.

the return of the former President Quwwatli from his exile in Egypt and the restoration of the old Parliament. Reflecting this determination, the Atasi government outlined its main mission in its policy statement as making preparations for a general election for a Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution. Second, either by conviction or lest they be perceived less progressive than Za'im, the members of the new cabinet did not choose to rescind the reform measures of the previous period.⁷ Last but not the least, the members of the cabinet were fully aware that revocation of the pipeline agreements or the monetary agreement would harm relations with the interested states which included France, the United States, Britain, Saudi Arabia and Iraq.⁸ The abrogation of the armistice agreement could, on the other hand, immediately lead to the resumption of the hostilities with Israel. Thus rather than facing such a grave prospect in the wake of its formation, the Atasi government quietly remained committed to the agreement and left out, rather pragmatically, the entire issue of relations with the Jewish state in its pronouncements.

It also appears that the diplomatic envoys of France, Britain and the United States conveyed to their interlocutors that their governments would withhold recognition from the new regime in Syria in case the related agreements were not honoured.⁹ In this respect it is notable that Foreign Minister Nazim al-Qudsi had hastened in his first day in office to assure the interested parties by declaring his conviction that the Government would honour the international agreements concluded during the previous regime.¹⁰ Subsequently, France, Britain and the United States acted in concert as they had done after Syria's first coup and formally recognised the new Syrian Government on 20 September 1949.¹¹ Their action came, once more, after recognition by the regional heavyweights. And it was delayed since one of these regional actors, Egypt, had been determined to withhold joint Arab recognition as much as it could.

The toppling of Za'im and the instalment of a government dominated by the People's Party, which was known to be favourably disposed towards some sort of unity with Iraq, was received with consternation in Cairo whose rulers declared a three-day

⁷ Hawrani, 2000, 2: 1034-1047.

⁸ 'Azm, 1973, 2: 209.

⁹ Mu'allim, 1985: 123

¹⁰ *New York Times*, 16 August 1949; Hawrani, 2000, 2: 1017.

¹¹ *New York Times*, 17 August 1949.

mourning for the slain Syrian leader. Conversely, an air of festivity reigned in the Hashemite courts in Baghdad and Amman whose lords were all too happy to see the removal of a leader who had abandoned his initial pro-unity posture in favour of close co-operation with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, France, the United States and Turkey.¹² Correspondingly, once the new government was formed King 'Abdallah of Jordan sent a telegram of congratulation to Prime Minister Atasi and only few days later he extended formal recognition to the new regime in Syria. Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Sa'id too sent a congratulatory telegram to his counterpart in Damascus but rather than granting recognition his government argued that there was no need to for such an act since, so they claimed, the change was a wholly internal Syrian affair.¹³

But, as the special court set up after the July 1958 coup which put an end to the monarchical regime in Iraq verified, Baghdad had colluded with the conspirators.¹⁴ Yet, while gaining the upper hand in the 'struggle for Syria' by actively encouraging the Syrian military to remove an antagonistic regime and install a friendly government in its place, the Iraqis refrained from bringing the matters to a head with their regional rivals by not pushing for an immediate unity. Instead, they tactfully waited for those entrusted to run the affairs of Syria to bring about unity through constitutional channels. Thus while talks were discreetly being held with the most notable adherents of the idea of Syrian-Iraqi union in the Syrian cabinet (Prime Minister Atasi, Foreign Minister Qudsi, Interior Minister Rushdi al-Kihkia and Minister of State 'Azma), Nuri al-Sa'id, who, in any case, was not as enthusiastic as Regent of Iraq 'Abd al-Ilah, who saw in the idea of the union an opportunity to climb to a future Syrian throne, tried to soothe Egyptian fury by issuing a statement in Alexandria against both the Fertile Crescent and Greater Syria projects. Likewise in Syria Foreign Minister Qudsi refuted the allegation that the coup was a first step towards the realisation of the Greater Syria project and pledged to preserve Syria's republican regime. Despite these assurances, Egypt got the meeting of the Political Committee of the Arab League postponed twice lest the participation of the representatives of the new regime in Damascus be interpreted as a *de facto* recognition. However, after the adoption of a new electoral law by the Syrian cabinet and following its representations to the Secretary of the Arab League, Egypt finally gave in and

¹² *New York Times*, 20 August 1949; Arslan, 1994, 2: 871.

¹³ *New York Times*, 20 August 1949; Hawrani, 2000, 2: 1016.

¹⁴ Mu'allim, 1985: 120.

extended official recognition, together with Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, to the new regime in Damascus on 19 September 1949.¹⁵

4.2.1. Elections and the Question of Unity with Iraq

Upon assuming power, the Atasi government lifted the ban placed on the newspapers by the previous regime¹⁶ and legalised all political parties except the far-right Socialist Co-operative Party¹⁷ and the SCP.¹⁸ Elections for a Constituent Assembly were held, in mid-November, with eighteen-year-olds and women voting for the first time in the history of any Arab country. The returns gave the People's Party dominance in the Constituent Assembly which elected Prime Minister Atasi temporary Head of State on 14 December 1949.¹⁹ In its first session two days earlier, the assembly had elected the People's Party leader Kihkia as its Speaker who in turn appointed a three-man committee to draft the text of the oath to be taken by the Head of State and the deputies.²⁰

However, the wording of the oath became the focal point of debate since it deeply touched the question of unity with Iraq. Although a substantial majority supported Arab unity at least in principle, two rival blocs were formed in the assembly. The first led by the People's Party advocated unity with Iraq and had the support of the military leader Hinnawi. Meanwhile, the pro-union trend had further been strengthened by the issuing by the National Party, which until then had fiercely opposed both Fertile Crescent and Greater Syria plans, on 29 September, of a manifesto calling for union with Iraq. This unexpected U-turn was interpreted as a move to deny the People's Party the political benefits of a movement which appeared to have popular support.²¹ The second, which later styled itself the Republican Bloc, adamantly opposed unity with monarchical Iraq. The most fervent members of this bloc were Mustafa Siba'i of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hawrani of the Youth Party who was in touch with the anti-union current in the Syrian army.

¹⁵ Hawrani, 2000, 2: 1016-1020.

¹⁶ These newspapers included People's Party's *al-Sha'b* (Damascus), *al-Suri al-jadid* (Homs) and *al-Nazir* (Aleppo) as well as Ba'th Party's *al-Ba'th*. See Ibid.: 976.

¹⁷ The Socialist Co-operative Party was founded in 1948 by Faysal al-'Asali who modelled it on the fascist European parties of the inter-war period. See Seale, 1986: 96; Mu'allim, 1985: 76; Jabbur, 1993: 145.

¹⁸ *New York Times*, 16 August 1949; Seale, 1986: 76-77; Petran, 1972: 98.

¹⁹ For the full list of the 114 elected members of the new assembly, see 'Afash, 1988: 59-61.

²⁰ The committee consisted of Hasan al-Hakim, Husni al-Barazi and Zaki al-Khatib. Hawrani, 2000, 2: 1106.

²¹ Seale, 1986: 77-78; Ziadeh, 1957: 108.

The pro-unity stance of the People's Party towards Iraq emanated from the political rivalry between Aleppo and Damascus and had economic considerations as underlying factors. Aleppo had prospered within the unity of the Ottoman Empire and suffered more than Damascus from the arbitrary post-World War I partitions. The loss of the greater part of its commercial hinterland had forced a drastic contraction of its economy during the inter-war period.²² However, during World War II, the difficulties of obtaining manufactured goods from traditional foreign suppliers together with the increased demand for consumption goods brought about by Allied expenditure stimulated local industrial growth and in turn led to major investments by Aleppine entrepreneurs in the Jazira region expanding the margins of cultivation.²³ As Yusif Sayigh maintained their contribution went beyond 'opening up of the north-eastern frontier' and included the introduction on a large scale of machines, building of roads, installation of irrigation pumps and creation of irrigation networks, the financing or arranging finance needs and finally introducing new tenure arrangements.²⁴ The resulting economic boom enabled Aleppo to re-emerge as Syria's main entrepreneurial centre in need of expanding its northern and eastern commercial hinterland. As Philip Khoury argued, while Turkey remained hostile to this idea, Iraq was encouraging.²⁵ The political expression of Aleppo's economic interests was embodied in People's Party and hence came its commitment to the removal of trade barriers and the abolition of Syrian-Iraqi frontier within which, in Patrick Seale's words, 'Syria suffocated'.²⁶

The adherents of the Republican Bloc, on the other hand, were unwilling to sacrifice Syria's republican regime for a monarchy. For them the election of a 'Head of State' rather than a 'President of the Republic' on 14 December was a calculated step to prepare the way for the Iraqi regent, 'Abd al-Ilah, who was in search of a throne since King Faisal II would come of age in four year's time, to realise his ambition. Adding to their anxieties, the regent had already shown up in Damascus during the election campaign to further his cause. Moreover, pointing to the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930

²² Khoury, 1987: 623.

²³ The area under cultivation, including fallow land, rose from about 1.76 million hectares in 1938 to 2.3 million in 1945 and reached 3.09 million hectares by 1950. IBRD, 1955: 18-19.

²⁴ Sayigh, 1978: 238.

²⁵ Khoury, 1987: 623.

²⁶ Seale, 1986: 30.

that sanctioned British influence in Iraq,²⁷ they claimed that a union with the latter would inevitably bring Syria too under the 'yoke of imperialism'.²⁸

The showdown came over the wording of the oath to be taken by the Head of State and the members of the constituent assembly. While the text of the oath prepared by the appointed committee made no mention of Syria's republican regime,²⁹ opponents of unity with Iraq insisted that the oath should include a pledge to work not only for Arab unity but also to preserve the republican regime and tabled an amendment to that effect. But the People's Party together with its following of the independents in the assembly easily managed to reject the proposed amendment.³⁰ The result was a clear approval of policy of union with Iraq and signified the removal of the last obstacle standing on the way of a Syrian-Iraqi Union.

However, for the opponents of the union, especially for some influential officers in the Syrian army who were cultivated by Hawrani, too much was at stake. As Patrick Seale asserted, they were republicans, they could not tolerate being under British tutelage and they did not want to take a secondary position in the larger Iraqi army.³¹ On the night before the swearing-in of the Head of State, which was scheduled for 19 December, the third coup d'état was carried out by the Commander of the First Brigade and the long-time friend of Hawrani, Colonel Adib al-Shishakli.³²

4.3. The Rule of Shishakli

The first communiqué issued by Colonel Shishakli on 19 December 1949 stated that the army had been compelled to put an end to the conspiracies of the Chief of General Staff and some 'contemptible politicians' who, together with some foreign circles, threatened

²⁷ For the provisions of the agreement which reduced Iraq, in the words of an author of a monumental work on the country, into 'an appendage of the British Empire', see Batatu, 1978: 545.

²⁸ Hawrani, 2000, 2: 1026-1114.

²⁹ Their draft text read as follows: 'I pledge before God to respect the laws of the state, safeguard the independence of the homeland, its sovereignty and the integrity of its territory, to safeguard the public purse and work for the realisation of the union of Arab countries.' See Seale, 1986: 84-85 and Hawrani, 2000, 2: 1107.

³⁰ The proposed amendment was rejected by a majority of 60 to 48. Seale, 1986: 85; Be'eri, 1970: 62; Hawrani, 2000, 2: 1108-1111.

³¹ Seale, 1986: 81.

³² The coup was carried out without any bloodshed. Although Hinnawi was arrested, he was released from prison on 7 September 1950, only to be shot dead in Beirut on 31 October by a cousin of Muhsin al-Barazi, the former prime minister who had been executed in the aftermath of Hinnawi's coup. Ibid.: 86, note 2.

the 'integrity of the army, the survival of the state and its republican regime.' Moreover, the communiqué included a pledge to leave the affairs of the country in the hands of its legally elected representatives and not to intervene in the political affairs 'unless the security and survival of the country renders it necessary'.³³

Despite this concluding remark, Shishakli proved himself no less ambitious than the leader of Syria's first coup, Za'im. Although Atasi was initially retained as Head of State and the Constituent Assembly was allowed to function, Shishakli led another coup d'état that put an end to the pretence of a parliamentary regime on 29 November 1951. Yet while Za'im had climbed to the presidency of the state within the third month of his rule, Shishakli proceeded to pull the strings as a strong man behind various governments that followed his coups until he finally got himself elected President in July 1953.³⁴

On his way to the apex of the administrative hierarchy, Shishakli resumed what had been initiated under Za'im: social and economic reform by decree. In this respect, the six-month period from his second coup until the summer of 1952 was most notable as it witnessed the issuing of over 250 degrees most of which dealt with educational, social and economic problems. As Walid al-Mu'allim maintains, Shishakli attempted to show his critics that what could not have been achieved during the previous six years could be accomplished within only six months.³⁵ These and subsequent measures, for example, extended government control to foreign as well as to Syrian private schools and forbade the opening of new missionary schools; made the approval by the Ministry of Education a requirement for the receipt of funds from abroad for educational purposes; attempted to raise the standards in secondary schools by the compulsory teaching of English and French; stipulated the reorganisation of scouting and sporting associations to eliminate all suggestion of an exclusive ethnic membership; terminated the last vestiges of communal representation established by the French and diluted by the governments of the post-independence period; abolished Druze and Alawi personal laws and brought

³³ Communiqué No.1 dated 19 December 1949 as reproduced in 'Azm, 1973, 2: 226-227; Mu'allim, 1985: 133-134.

³⁴ Between Shishakli's first coup and his managed election as President seven cabinets rose and fell in succession. While the first and the fourth were formed by 'Azm, the second and the third were formed by Qudsi. The last three, on the other hand, were formed by Hasan al-Hakim, Ma'ruf al-Dawalibi and General Fawzi Selu. Mu'allim, 1985: 136-160.

³⁵ Mu'allim, 1985: 158.

the members of these communities under Syrian law; ordered the religious leaders and mosque functionaries to wear a standard costume; required merchants to keep records in order to collect income taxes more effectively, increased inheritance taxes as well as taxes on high incomes and reduced some indirect taxes but, as we shall see, these did little to dent the regressive nature of the prevailing tax system.³⁶

But arguably the biggest failure was encountered with respect to the land reform legislation introduced as part of the 'Programme for Workers and Peasants' by which Shishakli attempted to create a social base for himself. Concerning the organised workers whose basic rights had already been recognised with the enactment of a comprehensive labour code at the dawn of independence,³⁷ the decrees issued in 1952 in accordance with the Programme provided for financial assistance for labour funds established to help in cases of industrial accidents and diseases. Thus, in Damascus, state contribution amounted to 30% of the labour funds' total income of SL54,000 in 1953. State backing was also promised for vocational training, the teaching of illiterates, the building of social centres, subsidised pharmacies and low-cost housing. In addition, the Ministry of National Economy was empowered to issue decisions concerning the fixing of working hours and weekly holidays, illicit competition and the allocation of funds for social assistance in trade unions.³⁸

The legislation issued to solicit peasant support for the regime addressed one of the most remarkable characteristics of the agrarian social structure: the extreme inequality in land ownership. According to an estimate which did not distinguish between rain-fed and irrigated lands, less than 1 percent of the landowners, those with large-holdings of over 100 hectares, controlled about one half of all the cultivated lands; nearly 10 percent of the holders, with middle-sized plots ranging from ten to one hundred hectares, owned about one-third of the farmed land; 30 percent of the rural population, with small-sized plots of less than 10 hectares, controlled the remaining 10 to 15 percent of the cultivated land. Consequently, landless peasants amounted to almost 60 percent of the agrarian population.³⁹ This inequality was at the heart of the intense rural unrest manifesting

³⁶ Torrey, 1964: 212; Scale, 1986: 121; Seurat, 1980: 116; Mu'allim, 1985: 158.

³⁷ Law No. 279 of 11 June 1946. For the analyses of this law and the evolution of the labour movement in Syria, see Allouni, 1959; Qattan, 1965; Sadowski, 1984: 131-138 and 210-213; Longuenesse, 1996.

³⁸ The relevant legislative decrees were Decree No. 15 of 2 February 1952 and Decree No. 138 of 6 November 1952. See Allouni, 1959: 68-69.

³⁹ Hinnebusch, 1989: 29-30.

itself in the form of sporadic but frequent landlord-peasant clashes in the summer of 1951 and culminating in a three-day peasant rally organised by Hawrani's Arab Socialist Party in Aleppo in mid-September 1951. The event, the first of its kind in the Arab world, was attended by thousands of participants from across the country who demanded agrarian reform.⁴⁰ Indeed, the Constitution of 1950 (Article 22) had provided for a more equitable distribution of land and had charged the Assembly to pass the necessary laws but landlord resistance had prevented effective action taken in that direction. It was against this background that Shishakli promised to provide some relief to the landless peasantry by distributing state lands. A series of decrees issued between January and November 1952 sought to prevent further landlord encroachment on state land by setting non-retroactive maximum limits for the private use of state lands and set out the modalities of the distribution of unclaimed state domain to landless peasants. However, this attempt at land reform foundered without producing any tangible result since, given the lack of an adequate cadastral survey, the state could not ascertain both the area and the location of the unregistered state domain.⁴¹ Although a new cadastre was started, Shishakli was overthrown before the actual redistribution of any lands.⁴² Despite this failure to alleviate rural poverty, Shishakli's tenure of power from his first coup in December 1949 to his fall in February 1954 marks an important stage in the evolution of the developmental role of the state to which we direct our focal attention.

4.4. Expanding Role of the State in the Syrian Economy and Indicators of Change

4.4.1. Limitations on Monetary Policy and Institution Building

One of the most important macroeconomic policy tools available to influence an economy is monetary policy which consists of changes in interest rates and in the amount of money in the economy. However, as it has already been mentioned in Chapter Three, Syria had no control over its own money supply until the conclusion of the monetary agreement with France in 1949. The volume of currency in circulation was completely determined by the foreign exchange position of the country at each moment. This rigid link between the supply of money and the foreign exchange position did not allow for a policy that could offset purely internal fluctuations in business activity and

⁴⁰ Seale, 1986: 120; Petran, 1972: 102.

⁴¹ Dabbagh, 1962: 4; Warriner, 1962: 101-105. The relevant decrees are reproduced in *Middle East Journal*, 1953: 69-74;

⁴² Sadowski, 1984: 215.

prices. Under these limitations, the Exchange Office (*Maktab al-qat'*) was transformed into a surrogate central bank. This office had been directly administered by the French Mandate authorities until its transfer to a joint Syrian-Lebanese committee in 1944 and had only become a purely Syrian institution following Syria's withdrawal from the franc bloc in 1948. Original task of the Exchange Office was to facilitate commercial transactions by absorbing surplus exchange in the export season, thereby creating a reserve of foreign currency to finance imports and to stabilise the value of the Syrian lira. While undertaking this task, the Exchange Office naturally affected both the money supply and the terms of trade. Once these powers, normally performed by central banks in other countries, were discerned by the government, they were deliberately used to influence the supply of money, the terms of trade and the balance of payment position. Thus the Ministry of Finance which wielded the Exchange Office as an instrument of monetary policy was credited for preventing the favourable trend in the balance of payments during 1953 from resulting in an undesired appreciation of the Syrian pound, which would have adversely affected Syria's exports.⁴³

The decisive step towards establishing a centralised monetary system and a central bank was taken with the introduction of a basic monetary law in March 1953.⁴⁴ Besides aiming at the regulation of banking activity and reorganisation of the currency system, the law laid the basis for the establishment of the Central Bank of Syria (CBS) and the formation of a central monetary authority called the Currency and Credit Council (*Majlis al-naqd wa al-taslif*) (CCC). The formation of the CBS awaited the conclusion of the negotiations with the BSL for the cancellation of its concession which was to last until 1964 if the convention signed during the mandate period was allowed to run its full course. Agreement which provided for the payment of an indemnification of SL300,000 for each year of the remaining period of the concession was finally signed in September 1955 and the CBS was officially inaugurated in August 1956.⁴⁵ On the other hand, the CCC was formed earlier in May 1953 and was charged with the task of regulating and coordinating monetary policy. The composition of the Council is illustrative of Shishakli's regime's positive attitude towards the private sector; alongside eight members from various government agencies, four private sector representatives were included. Each of these four members represented private commerce, banking, industry

⁴³ IBRD, 1955: 15; Barakat, 1954: 4; Sadowski, 1984: 227-229.

⁴⁴ Asfour, 1959: 55-60; 'Arafat and Malik 1996: 340-343.

⁴⁵ MEE, October 1955:170 and August 1956: 122; Asfour, 1959: 56-57.

and agriculture and were given full voting rights. Although private sector input to economic policy making in an economy dominated by the private sector would only be natural, the fact that its role was not confined to consultation but amounted to policy-making drew immediate criticism. As Asfour, a prominent Syrian economist, highlighted ‘the fact that one third of the voting members of the Currency and Credit Council, a policy-making body on the highest level, represent sectional private interests, including those of private banks, which may not always coincide with national interest in questions of monetary policy’ was highly questionable.⁴⁶

While government action concerning monetary policy concentrated on institution building and provision of a legal framework, Syria still lacked a fully developed financial infrastructure that would mobilise available resources to meet the investment needs of the economy. As an example, it is notable that in a country that aspired to capitalist development, interest rates were not regarded as a policy tool to influence the direction of the economy. Instead, a general legal maximum of 9 percent per annum was kept as the only provision concerning interest rates throughout the period.⁴⁷

4.4.2. The Regulation, Protection and Promotion of Industry, Agriculture and Trade

One of the key measures taken by the Syrian government during the 1950-53 period was the unilateral abrogation of the customs union with Lebanon in March 1950.⁴⁸ The Syrian-Lebanese customs union was a legacy of the mandate period but the divergence of the economies of the parties had made it increasingly difficult to agree on a common policy on the question of tariffs. While the Lebanese government had felt no obligation to alter the tariff structure since its economy was based on services and entrepôt trade, the Syrian government had favoured modifications to protect its agricultural and industrial production. The Syrian position reflected the view of the local bourgeoisie whose representatives organised a conference in Damascus in early March and

⁴⁶ The fact that some decisions of the Council, such as fixing an upper limit on interest rates, required a two-thirds majority added to the weight of the criticisms. Asfour, 1959: 56 and 65. See also Heydemann, 1999: 68.

⁴⁷ Asfour, 1959: 63.

⁴⁸ For the text of the decree (Legislative Decree No. 71 of 14 March 1950) and a detailed account of the Syrian-Lebanese negotiations preceding the abrogation of the customs union, see ‘Azm, 1973, 2: 5-78. For a survey of the evolution of Syrian-Lebanese economic and political relations in the post-war era, see Hussein, 1991.

produced a report which served as the basis of government policy.⁴⁹ Immediately after the abrogation the Syrian tariff on imports of certain products which competed with local industry was increased from 25 percent *ad valorem* to 40 percent or 50 percent. In the same year, a special customs duty of 5 percent was also introduced and was called 'consumption tax' on imported products, replacing various municipal taxes previously collected. Although its main purpose was increasing public revenue, this measure somewhat increased the protective effect of the tariff.⁵⁰

Afterwards, government regulation and protectionist policies became more pervasive. In March 1952, the business and investment freedom of non-Syrians, particularly the Lebanese middlemen and investors, was restricted by a decree forbidding foreign companies to carry out business in Syria unless they had Syrian representatives.⁵¹ Although this measure aimed at ensuring greater Syrian participation in the economy, it inevitably had the unintended effect of hampering foreign direct investment in the country. That despite another decree issued the following month to sanction the free entry and transfer of capital and create conditions facilitating commercial transactions.⁵²

Moreover, the Ministry of Finance had been sponsored a programme of low-interest loans to Syrian industrial corporations for their establishment or to enable them to continue operations. Reflecting the commitment to the fostering of the nascent Syrian industry the interests rates applied to the loans were kept below those prevailing on the capital market and the beneficiaries could secure an extension by the time of repayment.⁵³ Underscoring this favourable attitude towards Syrian entrepreneurs which marked Shishakli's rule, George Jabbur has fittingly described the period as 'the golden age of Syrian bourgeoisie'.⁵⁴

Effective state intervention in agriculture started with the creation of a Cereals Office in 1950. An outgrowth of the liquidated Mira Service,⁵⁵ the main task of the Office was to

⁴⁹ 'Azm, 1973, 2: 37; Dejjani, 1990: 90.

⁵⁰ IBRD, 1955: 378-379.

⁵¹ Barakat, 1954: 6; Franck, 1952: 445; Sayigh, 1978: 239; Samman, n. d.: 15.

⁵² Barakat, 1954: 4.

⁵³ IBRD, 1955: 381-382; Asfour, 1959: 112.

⁵⁴ Jabbur, 1993: 60.

⁵⁵ The Mira Service was established during the Second World War to meet the needs of both the population and the Allied forces for cereals. It purchased crops directly from cultivators, built up

regulate the market for cereals through purchases and sales in order to prevent wide price fluctuations.⁵⁶ The state's capacity for intervention in agriculture was expanded with the establishment of a Cotton Office in 1951 to undertake research and provide adequate information on seed selection, use of fertilisers, pest control, grading, packing and marketing. Moreover, the new institution was authorised to delimit the area of cotton cultivation and define the appropriate seasons for its planting and harvesting.⁵⁷ The Cotton Office was formed with the assistance of the Chambers of Agriculture after the simultaneous decrease of worldwide prices and the fall of the cotton yield by 50% due to an epidemic of cotton fungus caused by high humidity.⁵⁸ The outcome, from the state's machinery's point of view, was the development of new state capacities and legitimate expansion of the role of the state into areas that would otherwise remain the preserve of the private sector.⁵⁹ But the assumption of a greater role in an economy hampered by the lack of sufficient capital to promote economic development would inevitably compel state leaders to address the question of where and how to acquire the needed resources or suffer the consequences.

State support to the Syrian agriculture in the form of bank credit was given a new impetus especially after the cotton fungus epidemic in 1951. The Agricultural Bank of Syria, a government institution that was the local successor to the nineteenth century Ottoman Agricultural Bank, was reformed and its capital was expanded to alleviate the losses of the affected landholders and to meet seasonal credit needs.⁶⁰ Thus, the number of extended loans increased from about 4,000 in 1949 to over 10,000 in 1951 and their value rose from approximately SL2 million to almost SL14 million.⁶¹ As Sadowski maintains, notwithstanding the broadening of the range of the borrowers, most of the beneficiaries still were owners of large or medium-sized landholdings who not only survived the cotton crises but even expanded their plots at the expense of smallholders who could not escape bankruptcy.⁶²

stockpiles and imposed price controls until the beginning of its liquidation in 1948. Makdisi, 1961: 55, note 1; Sadowski, 1984: 279, note 41.

⁵⁶ Makdisi, 1961: 55.

⁵⁷ Ziadeh, 1957: 131; Sayigh, 1978: 239; Sadowski, 1984: 221.

⁵⁸ Sadowski, 1984: 219.

⁵⁹ Evans, 1985: 195-196. Roughly a decade later, in 1965, during the Ba'ath Party's nationalisation drive, the Cereals Office and an off-shoot of the Cotton Office would be given the monopoly of export of wheat and barley and of export and local consumption sales of cotton respectively. SAR, 1965: 117-119.

⁶⁰ Barakat, 1954: 6.

⁶¹ IBRD, 1955: 343.

⁶² Sadowski, 1984: 220-221.

4.4.3. International Trade Agreements

In this period of economic growth, the Syrian Government concluded several trade agreements with Arab and other countries with a view to promoting exports. Most of these agreements were bilateral whose terms differed from country to country.⁶³ For example, the agreement with West Germany was concluded in the beginning of 1951 and provided for an exchange totalling \$20 million annually. Accordingly, West Germany was to buy Syrian cotton, hides and skins, and 50,000 tons of wheat and other cereals while Syria was to get machinery, equipment, chemical and pharmaceutical goods and manufactured products.⁶⁴ According to the trade agreement concluded with Japan, the Syrian Government agreed to cancel the high customs tariff imposed on Japanese goods while Japan was to buy 5,000 tons of Syrian cotton a year.⁶⁵ The trade agreement with Czechoslovakia, the first of its kind between an East European country and Syria,⁶⁶ was concluded in September 1952 and included the most-favoured-nation clause. Under the agreement Czechoslovakia was required to purchase 75 percent of its exports to Syria from that country.⁶⁷ As Syrian exports to Czechoslovakia made up for only a small fraction of imports from there, the agreement was expected to result in a considerable expansion of Syrian exports to Czechoslovakia.⁶⁸ In a similar way, the agreement with Yugoslavia which was concluded in July 1953 included a provision by which Yugoslavia undertook to accept payments in the form of Syrian exports, particularly cereals and cotton, for services provided by Yugoslav contractors.⁶⁹ The agreement with Lebanon needed to regulate bilateral trade relations in the wake of the abrogation of the customs union was finally concluded in February 1951 after protracted negotiations. The agreement provided for a free exchange of local agricultural and industrial products while their tariffs in force were to be applied to

⁶³ In the 1950-1953 period, Syria concluded trade agreements with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon among the Arab countries and with Czechoslovakia, India, Greece, Yugoslavia, Germany and Japan as well as a payments agreement with France. IBRD, 1955: 233-237 and 385.

⁶⁴ Trade relations between Germany and Syria were interrupted in late 1952 in connection with the German restitution of payments to Israel only to be resumed in July 1953. *MEE*, February 1951: 11 and July 1953: 11.

⁶⁵ However, both sides agreed to retain the right to take measures to protect their local industries. *MEE*, July 1953: 11; IBRD, 1955: 233.

⁶⁶ Pechota, 1981: 87.

⁶⁷ *MEE*, September 1952: 11 and December 1952: 10.

⁶⁸ Czechoslovakian exports to Syria in 1951 amounted to SL3,824,000 while Syrian exports to that country were no more than SL120,000. *SSA*, 1951: 119.

⁶⁹ *ESE*, 1954: 23.

industrial products which were largely made of imported raw materials.⁷⁰ This agreement reflected the Syrian view which argued for retaining control over imports and was replaced in March 1953 by a similar agreement⁷¹ which remained in effect for fifteen years until the conclusion of Syrian-Lebanese Economic Agreement of 8 October 1968.⁷²

During the period under question, Syria concluded one multilateral trade agreement, namely the Convention for Facilitating Trade and Regulating Transit between the States of the Arab League. The parties to the convention that was signed in September 1953 were Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, North Yemen and Libya. Under this convention the signatories undertook to mutually abolish existing tariffs on a comprehensive list of agricultural and animal products and also to apply a tariff rate of 25% of their existing tariff rates to a list of a considerable number of industrial products. But they did not exempt trade among the signatory countries from existing import and export licenses and restrictions nor did they rule out the institution of new ones.⁷³

The effects of these agreements will emerge in the detailed analysis of Syrian foreign trade and balance of payments to be undertaken immediately after the following examination of advances in development planning and public investment in development projects.

4.4.4. Development Planning and Public Investment in Development Projects

It has been rightly observed that successive governments did not have a comprehensive economic development plan during the first decade following independence. As a Syrian expert stated:⁷⁴

Development projects were studied and approved piece-meal under pressure of need and circumstances, without reference to any general programme, and without being subjected in their administration, execution, or the management of

⁷⁰ *MEE*, March 1951: 10.

⁷¹ The text of the agreement is reproduced in Damascus Chamber of Commerce, 1999: 264-276.

⁷² Legislative Decree No. 104 of 1968 as reproduced in *Rapport 1968-69*: C63-C75.

⁷³ Text of the convention is reproduced in Damascus Chamber of Commerce, 1999: 485-505. See also IBRD, 1955: 385-386; Sayigh, 1979: 24; ASBP, 1977: 203.

⁷⁴ See Barakat, 1954: 15.

their financial and economic effects, to one single authority that could direct the whole operation and create the conditions for its success. The projects had nothing in common except the great need felt for them and the necessity of funding the required funds.

In the absence of a complete list of the needed projects put in an order of priority, an estimate of their cost and the time required for their execution as well as lack of sufficient capital, Syrian rulers were bound to have an uphill struggle in their endeavour to improve and increase production and raise living standards. However, a process was put in place that would eventually lead to achieving this vital aim of formulating a long-term development plan and a single authority to manage it. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a British firm, Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners, was invited to study the country's economic resources and development potential as early as 1946. In 1949, after becoming Minister of Agriculture following Hinnawi's coup, Hawrani arranged for the survey's translation into Arabic and for its distribution in Syria and circulation abroad through Syrian embassies as his country's blueprint for development.⁷⁵ Moreover, the preparation of a general development plan by the Syrian Government was reported in 1951.⁷⁶ In February 1953, it was reported that the Syrian Government was studying the use of foreign capital to finance its development and financial schemes that were estimated to cost about US\$ 500 million, almost eight times more than government revenues in the 1953 budget or an amount slightly larger than the Syria's national income in 1953. As part of the same study, discussions with the representatives of the IBRD took place and the Syrian envoys abroad were instructed by the Government to publicise the development projects of the country in international financial quarters.⁷⁷ The following month, the Syrian Government decided to adopt a five-year large-scale construction programme that would entail the evaluation of a multitude of projects and their harmonisation and classification under the point of view of increasing national production. The total cost of the projects was estimated at about SL325 million and the possibilities of domestic public financing up to LS195 million was outlined while the remaining SL130 million was left uncovered. Accordingly, an Administration Council was also to be established, consisting of the Ministers of Finance, Economy, Health, Agriculture, Public works, representatives of the Currency and Credit Council as well as

⁷⁵ Hawrani, 2000, 2: 1026.

⁷⁶ *MEE*, June 1951: 10.

⁷⁷ *MEE*, February 1953: 11.

banks experts and technicians.⁷⁸ Therefore, by the end of 1953 Syria had reached the point where the need for a long-term development programme gained sufficient ground to prompt the President Shishakli to commit the state's development policy to the idea.⁷⁹

The state's future development policy must be embodied in an economic development programme that includes all the projects of the government and public institutions. We consider that this programme should cover a period of not less than five years... It is necessary that the programme should have a special administration directly linked to the Office of the Chief of the State... The Administration should undertake the study of projects and estimate their importance, order of priority, probable benefits, the length of time needed to carry them out, and their cost. It should prepare technical specifications and after approving them should supervise their execution.

Meanwhile, despite being piece-meal and not part of a general plan, public investment in Syria's infrastructure had already started to gain some momentum after 1950. Apart from public utility projects such as automatic telephones, electricity installations and Aleppo water scheme, and in addition to road construction and small-scale irrigation projects, ambitious projects such as the reclamation of Ghab and the Latakia Port were initiated.⁸⁰ Development projects were financed from four sources. First, from appropriations allocated from the state budget; secondly, from available treasury funds; thirdly, from the loans advanced by the Issue Department of the BSL; and finally from foreign loans such as the Saudi loan.⁸¹

The most important transport project undertaken during Shishakli's rule was the development of the port of Latakia to make it the main outlet for the exports of the northern and north-eastern agricultural regions and to handle much of Syria's imports coming in previously via Beirut port.⁸² The project was made possible by a \$6 million interest-free Saudi loan in 1950 and got under way when a company (Latakia Port

⁷⁸ *MEE*, March 1953: 11.

⁷⁹ President Shishakli's statement to the Parliament on the financial and economic conditions in Syria, October 1953, as quoted in Barakat, 1954: 17.

⁸⁰ Asfour, 1959: 80.

⁸¹ Barakat, 1954: 10.

⁸² With the help of decrees issued by the Syrian government in order to direct certain classes of imports and exports via Latakia, the volume of traffic at the port grew rapidly and amounted in 1953 to 90 percent of the overseas exports and 46 percent of the overseas imports of the country. IBRD, 1955: 14 and 447.

Company), capitalised at SL24 million, was formed to establish and operate the port as a joint public-private sector corporation. Initially the Government intended to hold only one-third of the total shares of the company and offered the rest to private investors whom were guaranteed an annual dividend of 5 percent. However, the fact that private sector subscription eventually amounted to no more than one-tenth of the capital of the company pointed towards the need for public investment in infrastructure projects.⁸³

The Ghab project, on the other hand, was the biggest development project initiated by Shishakli's regime.⁸⁴ At that time the Ghab Valley was a swampy thirty miles long six miles wide depression stretching north and south along the borders of Latakia and Aleppo provinces and was created by the Orontes river whose flow had been impeded by the existence of a hard basaltic sill. The multi-purpose project aimed at reclamation of an area of 35,000 hectares by lowering the sill, deepening the river bed and constructing a network of drainage canal. It also involved the construction of a reservoir with a storage capacity of about 68 million cubic meters behind a dam near Halfaya to control the Orontes flood, and a second dam near Rastane to provide a reservoir of about 180-265 million cubic meters to irrigate about 65,000 hectares including the reclaimed land. With the addition of 43,000 hectares that had not been previously irrigated, the project would double the areas covered by government irrigation schemes and would increase the total irrigated lands of the country by about 10 percent. Moreover, the 29,000 hectares of the land to be reclaimed was government owned and would be distributed to landless peasants in nearby areas. In addition, about 20,000-kw of electric power, almost one-fourth of the installed power capacity in 1953, would eventually be generated in hydro-electric plants at Rastane, Maharde and Jisr al-Shughur. The entire project was originally estimated at SL136.5 million but the IBRD mission suggested that the cost would exceed the original estimate and reach about SL171 million. In early 1951, the Syrian parliament approved the establishment of a special agency (the Administrative Office of the Drainage and Irrigation Works of the Ghab Lands) for the administration of the project and a loan of SL25 million was put at its disposal from the available funds of the treasury. Although it required over a decade for its completion, the Ghab project represented the first major accomplishment through

⁸³ IBRD, 1955: 144 and 446-448; 'Azim, 1973, 2: 117-126.

⁸⁴ The information on the project has been derived from the following sources: *MEE*, March 1951: 50; IBRD, 1955, p. 44 and pp. 327-330; *MEE*, June 1955: 89; Peretz, 1964: 300; *All about the Projects of Development in Syria*, 1971: 33; Metral, 1980: 308-311.

Syrian government planning, finance and action to exploit a significant national resource.

Concomitant with the expanding role of the state in the economy Syria began to acquire quite a sizeable public sector. In the 1950-1954 period the flourishing of the public sector took place in two main ways: On the one hand, state agencies were formed to assume responsibility for the implementation of needed development projects. On the other hand, foreign owned concessionary companies were taken over by the state. Of these, some such as water and electricity utilities, railways as well as the Régie de Tabac, the French-owned tobacco monopoly, were nationalised against indemnification.⁸⁵ Some others were taken over by the state at the expiration of their concessions as was the case with the French Lighthouse Company.⁸⁶

4.4.5. Foreign Trade and Balance of Payments

Foreign trade has always constituted a significant portion of Syria's total trade and its national income. Over the three year period between 1951-1953 which followed the dissolution of the Syrian-Lebanese customs union,⁸⁷ the value of imports averaged around 30 percent of the estimated national income and exports around 22 percent.⁸⁸ The composition of trade reflected the general structure of the economy as the bulk of Syrian exports were mainly composed of agricultural products which were sold as raw materials or intermediate goods while the imports were composed of finished goods either in the form of food products or necessary durable consumption goods or as machinery or raw materials essential for the operation and running of certain manufacturing industries as a result contributing to the formation of fixed capital.⁸⁹

As Table 3 indicates during the 1951-1953 period, Lebanon remained Syria's main trade partner, receiving almost 25% of Syria's exports and supplying around 10% of its imports. Syria's exports to Arab countries represented around 40% of its exports while the latter supplied only around 18% of Syria's imports. West European countries and the United States received about half of Syria's exports with France, the United

⁸⁵ Sadowski, 1984: 186-187.

⁸⁶ *MEE*, December 1953: 11.

⁸⁷ As separate foreign trade figures for Syria became available only after the break up of the customs union with Lebanon, the analysis of foreign trade in this study starts from 1951.

⁸⁸ IBRD, 1955: 11.

⁸⁹ Helbaoui, 1964: 2.

Kingdom and the United States accounting for almost 80% of this amount. On the other hand, about two-thirds of Syrian imports were obtained from the United States and Western Europe; five major countries, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Western Germany and Italy representing one half of Syria's total imports. During this period, trade with Socialist countries was comparably insignificant. In 1953 imports from Czechoslovakia, China and Romania accounted for only SL6.7 million or less than 3 percent of the total imports while Syrian exports to these countries were negligible.⁹⁰ As the same table confirms, the trade agreement with West Germany seems to have made a substantial impact as Syria's exports to the former climbed from 1% in 1951 to 3.1% of the total value of the exports in 1952 and to 6.4% in 1953 while Syria's imports from West Germany almost doubled during the same period and accounted for 9.5% of total value of the imports in 1953. Nevertheless, the desired effect of the other trade agreements was yet to be experienced.

As Table 3 demonstrates, over the three-year period 1951-1953, Syrian exports increased rather steadily in total value while the rise in imports was slower. Although the figures suggest a deficit for the year 1951 and a favourable balance of trade for the following two years, a note of caution and a major adjustment is necessary as different exchange rates were applied in the customs returns. The Syrian authorities converted the foreign exchange value of the imports into Syrian lira at the official exchange rate, which was SL2.20 to the dollar, but when converting the value of exports used the free market rate, which in the years 1951-1953 fluctuated between SL3.51 and SL3.89. This had the effect of overvaluing exports and undervaluing imports in terms of the Syrian lira.⁹¹ According to Table 4 which illustrates the customs and adjusted IMF figures, between 1951 and 1953, the growth rate of exports outpaced the rise in imports and helped reduce Syria's actual trade deficit, from about \$45 million to \$15 million. This deficit, however, was mainly covered, on the current account of the balance of payments, by local expenditures and oil transit payments made by foreign oil companies; by bank funds⁹² transferred to Syria partly to meet the credit needs of an expanding economy and partly due to the shift in the financing of Syria's foreign trade

⁹⁰ SSA, 1953: 135-137.

⁹¹ IBRD, 1955: 11-12.

⁹² During the early 1950s, in addition to the state owned Agricultural Bank, there were 15 accredited commercial banks and ten of these, including all the larger institutions, were foreign: five were French, two Jordanian, and one each British, Iraqi and Egyptian. See IBRD, 1955: 15.

from Beirut to Aleppo and Damascus; by remittances from Syrians abroad; by the Saudi loan; and the United Nations Relief and Works Administration (UNRWA)⁹³ expenditures in Syria.⁹⁴

4.4.6. Central Government Receipts and Expenditures

As Table 6 on ordinary and extraordinary budgetary expenditures and receipts of central government illustrates,⁹⁵ expenditures registered in the ordinary budget of the central government rose from about SL141 million in 1949 to about SL196 million in 1953 indicating an increase of nearly 40 percent over this period. Moreover, extraordinary budgetary expenditures amounted to SL137.7 million, of which SL89 million was spent on defence whereas extraordinary receipts for defence not included in the ordinary budget totalled SL18 million.⁹⁶ Table 8 on ordinary budget expenditures of central governments and their percentage composition indicates that the armed forces, gendarmerie, police and public security claimed the lion's share by accounting for almost half of ordinary budget expenditures. In 1953, gendarmerie's share alone in the budget was larger than the share of the Ministries of Public Health, Agriculture, National Economy and Justice all combined. During this period, expenditure on education increased spectacularly in absolute amount and claimed 18.2 percent of all outlays in 1953.⁹⁷

⁹³ The UNRWA was established under the UN Resolution No. 302 of 8 December 1949 and was charged with the care of Palestinian refugees from Palestine.

⁹⁴ IBRD, 1955: 13; Asfour, 1959: 62-63; Kanovsky, 1977: 54.

⁹⁵ Syria lacked a consolidated budget covering all central government receipts and expenditures until 1969-70. In the 1949-53 period, the Syrian fiscal system was based on five main budgets: (1) ordinary, covering the various ministries; (2) extraordinary, initiated in 1949 to provide additional funds for defence and development projects; (3) autonomous, covering public bodies such as the Cereals Office or the Agricultural Bank whose budgets were independent of the Ordinary Budget even though their original capital was provided by the Central Government; (4) annexed, for, for example, the Syrian University and the Arab Academy of Damascus (founded in 1913) whose deficit figured in the ordinary budget; (5) budgets for municipalities. In the light and also the limitations of the intricacies of the fiscal system and the other discrepancies alluded to by the IBRD mission in its report which make it difficult to obtain a precise and complete picture, the subsequent analysis concentrates on the first two budgets which were directly at the disposal of the central government. For an assessment of the limitations of Syrian statistics concerning national income accounts, see IBRD, 1955, Annex B: 255-291.

⁹⁶ A breakdown year by year for defence expenditures and receipts outside the ordinary budget is not available.

⁹⁷ The emphasis and the significantly high government spending on education perhaps produced the biggest achievement for the post-World War II regimes. For example, the number of children attending primary schools increased from about 150,000 in 1945-1946 to 311,000 in 1952-1953 while enrolment in intermediary and secondary schools rose more rapidly –from 12,661 to 47,670. During this eight-year period 1319 new primary schools were established bringing the total to 2399. However, the number of private primary schools fell from 343 to 335 while the number of state primary schools increased from 737 to 2,064. Ibid.: 456-457.

On the other hand, as shown in Table 7, ordinary revenue increased from about SL136 million in 1949 to about SL217 million in 1953, registering a remarkable increase of almost 60 percent. Although during these years a greater percentage of the national income was extracted by the central government,⁹⁸ the figures indicate that sizeable budget deficits were also incurred due mainly to the surge in defence expenditures. The breakdown of ordinary government revenues reveals that only about a quarter of these revenues was provided by direct taxation. Moreover, the share of income and property taxes, which accounted for less than 10 percent of total revenue, was comparatively minor. The principle sources of central government revenue, on the other hand, were customs duties and excise taxes, which together accounted for about one-half of total revenue and gave a regressive character to the Syrian tax system in the sense that these indirect taxes claimed a much larger fraction of the incomes of the poor than of the wealthy as they tended to fall on articles of mass consumption such as sugar, petroleum products and tobacco.⁹⁹ This regressive nature of the tax system undoubtedly prevented an equitable distribution of benefits of economic growth and contributed to the political instability addressed earlier.

4.5. The Search for Financial Aid

As it can be derived from the tables and the analysis presented above, during the period under question the Syrian economy grew at a fairly remarkable pace, exports increased at an impressive rate and a greater proportion of the national income was extracted and spent by the state. However, despite all these developments, Syria was still experiencing a negative balance of trade and substantial budget deficits while the regressive nature of the tax system and the unequal distribution of the benefits of growth were causing resentment and instability.

Against this background, there was almost a consensus that a shortage of capital was the principle factor limiting further economic development and that massive public investment, particularly in irrigation and power schemes and transport facilities, would

⁹⁸ As mentioned before, in 1949-1953 the Syrian national income increased by about 28 percent.

⁹⁹ SSA: 234-235.

be needed to achieve breakthroughs.¹⁰⁰ The dilemma faced by Syria's rulers was aptly described by the Secretary of the Currency and Credit Council of Syria:¹⁰¹

The Syrian economy needs capital and finance projects that will create conditions favourable to its growth; but, as a result of its weakness and underdevelopment, it lacks the necessary financial means. In other words, the state's financial capacity is small and cannot expand unless national production grows; and national production cannot grow unless the state's financial capacity expands. How then, are we to get out of this vicious circle?'

As Za'im had tried earlier, the powerful man behind the third and fourth military coups in Syrian politics, Adib al-Shishakli, turned abroad in an attempt to secure the funds needed for development projects. Only three weeks after his first coup d'état and a day after the vote of confidence that took place on 7 January 1950 for 'Azm's compromise cabinet, Shishakli embarked on a trip to Egypt and Saudi Arabia to demonstrate that he was in control of Syrian politics, repair the breach caused by the Hinnawi interlude and explore the possibilities of obtaining financial assistance from these two Arab states which preferred an independent Syria rather than one united with the Hashemite Iraq. The assertion that financial assistance was subject of discussion between the parties and that it was sought to provide funds for the much-needed economic development projects was subsequently confirmed before the end of the same month. On 24 January it was announced that the Saudi Arabian Government had agreed to extend a \$6 million interest-free loan to Syria. This amount represented nearly one-sixth of the ordinary budget of the central government in 1950. According to the announcement that was made during the follow up visit by the Syrian Minister of National Economy, Ma'ruf al-Dawalibi, Syria was to receive the agreed amount in three instalments over a seven-month period and repay it in goods in four annual equal instalments in 1955-1958.¹⁰² According to Patrick Seale, this loan together with a £5 million promised but never paid loan by Egypt during Shishakli's visits to Cairo and Riyadh, was the price for

¹⁰⁰ Makdisi, 1961: 48; Helbaoui, 1964: 15; Keilany, 1973: 62. For a contrasting view, see Heydemann, 1999: 57-58.

¹⁰¹ Barakat, 1954: 7-8.

¹⁰² *Middle East Journal*, 'Chronology', 1950: 217-218.

underwriting the Syrian independence from the Hashemites.¹⁰³ In effect, the conclusion of the loan agreement in January 1950 signified the active recognition by the Syrian Government of the validity of the Tapline agreement which had been left at abeyance following the death of Za'im. Thus it was not a coincidence that Aramco was approached by the Saudi government for an advance to finance the loan and that the first instalment was paid by the Saudi authorities to their Syrian counterparts after the oil giant's compliance with their request. As a result of this loan, the Syrian Government issued a decree announcing the beginning of works at the port of Latakia on 13 February.¹⁰⁴ Only five days later, the *New York Times* reported that the Syrian government had undertaken 'to use eminent domain to obtain the necessary stripe of land' needed for the pipeline.¹⁰⁵ The balance of \$4 million, on the other hand, was handed over by the end of 1950 as work progressed in both the Latakia port and Tapline projects.¹⁰⁶

Another opportunity for the Syrian regime to attract technical assistance and economic aid for its development projects became available when President Truman proclaimed 'a bold new programme for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas' in his inaugural address in 1949. The programme, which widely became known as Point Four, received final legislative and executive approval in early 1950 and allocated \$10 million to Syria.¹⁰⁷ Although this sum represented approximately one half of the total Point Four aid to the Arab countries, it was rejected by the Syrian Prime Minister at a special press conference in June 1951.¹⁰⁸ Despite leaving the US officials in Syria perplexed and frustrated,¹⁰⁹ a close examination of the conditions and the size of the aid against the expectations of the Syrian leaders may uncover the underlying reasons behind the decision for its rejection. First of all, the nature of the criteria to be applied to the requests of assistance raised questions of foreign influence and control by giving the authorities implementing the programme in the United States almost a veto power over

¹⁰³ Seale, 1986: 92.

¹⁰⁴ Ziadeh, 1957: 109; Petran 1972: 100; 'Azm, 1973, 2: 121.

¹⁰⁵ *New York Times*, 18 February 1950.

¹⁰⁶ Holden and Johns, 1981: 149; Mu'allim, 1985: 143-144.

¹⁰⁷ For details and analyses of the programme, see Hakim, 1950; Gardiner, 1950.

¹⁰⁸ *MEE*, June 1951: 10; *Time*, 18 June 1951.

¹⁰⁹ In a letter to the Coordinator of US Economic and Technical Assistance in the Near East, the US Ambassador to Syria, Cavendish Cannon, referred to his staff in Damascus as 'prophets of frustration'. See Lesch, 1990: 41.

the development projects of the recipient countries.¹¹⁰ Besides, there was also a strong suspicion in Damascus that technical experts sent from the United States within the framework of the programme would meddle in Syria's political affairs.¹¹¹ Moreover, a fundamental premise of the Point Four aid was that United States private capital would flow to the underdeveloped countries for the realisation of a wide range of a projects to be recommended by the technical experts of the programme but the widely held belief in the Middle East was that private American capital would not cease to confine its main investments to the exploitation of the region's oil resources.¹¹² Therefore, while the Point Four aid allocated to recipient countries was intended to pay for educational and training programmes, preliminary surveys and feasibility studies, it made no direct provision of capital grants for the implementations of the projects which the Syrian themselves wanted. Finally, Truman's programme required contribution towards the cost of the Point Four technical assistance projects from the local treasuries concerned. As Shishakli himself explained:¹¹³

I have already stated that we are a small nation with limited financial resources and that we have a large-scale constructional programme involving many vital projects, for the execution of which we are in real need of great deal of assistance. We consider Point Four assistance, however, unsuitable and insufficient, in as much as it is meant to help backward nations in making studies of possible projects rather than in the execution of projects already studied and prepared. In fact we are fully aware how important it is that careful study should precede execution, but we do have many vital and urgent projects awaiting execution that we feel that the contributions we shall be required to make to the operation of the Point Four Assistance Programme can be more profitably and usefully used elsewhere. This is the reason why we have rejected Point Four assistance.

Although the conditions of the Point Four assistance were unacceptable and its size was considered to be insufficient, this rejection did not mean that Shishakli's regime

¹¹⁰ The criteria were three in number and are reproduced in Gardiner, 1950: 297.

¹¹¹ *MEE*, June 1951: 10. The strong suspicion was not utterly baseless as evidenced by the conclusion made at the US Chiefs of Mission Conference held in Istanbul in 1954: 'our most useful tool in maintaining our position of influence (in the Middle East) is technical assistance, both in the form of our military training mission and our Point Four experts.' See Lesch, 1990: 41.

¹¹² Hakim, 1950: 189-193.

¹¹³ Quoted in Ziadeh, 1957: 136.

completely gave up its search for US aid, it was actually holding out for a better deal.¹¹⁴ Subsequently, the most important and radical move in search of financial aid and technical assistance for the accomplishment of economic development and social reforms came out in the form of a peace offer made by Shishakli to Israel after his establishment of direct military rule in late 1951.

Shishakli was a pragmatic ruler who had participated in the 1948 war as a deputy commander of the Arab Liberation Army. He had experienced the defeat of his forces in Upper Galilee and was aware of the military might of the Israeli Army. Following his seizure of power he engaged in a systematic effort to strengthen the Syrian army¹¹⁵ but periodic violent confrontations precipitated by inexorable Israeli unilateral actions to extend its control in the demilitarised zone served as reminders of unbroken Israeli military superiority.¹¹⁶ Rather than fighting the Israeli state and facing an eventual defeat in a general war, Shishakli sought a political solution that could bring benefits to Syria and put the Israeli-Palestinian issue off the Syrian political agenda. Even before the peace offer, in February 1951, he had initiated a compromise proposal regarding the DMZ and later, in March, he had personally taken part in direct negotiations with the Israeli deputy chief of staff, Mordechai Makleff.¹¹⁷ Moreover, as he emphasised in his meeting with the U.S. Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, during the latter's visit to the Syrian capital in May 1953, he was not one of those Arabs who denied Israel's right to exist nor he was committed to pushing it into the sea. Instead, he expressed the more moderate demand that Israel adhere to the UN resolutions relating to the refugee problem, border demarcation and the internationalisation of Jerusalem. During the conversation, he also claimed that Syria had to spend half of its budget on defence and pointed out that the US had the capability through economic and military assistance to keep Syria independent.¹¹⁸ As Moshe Ma'oz put it:¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ While announcing the formal rejection of Point Four aid, Syrian Prime Minister 'Azm had added that the Syrian Government had not rejected financial aid from the United States and that it was waiting for further details on the matter. See *MEE*, June 1951: 10.

¹¹⁵ Seale, 1986: 119.

¹¹⁶ Khouri, 1963: 19-23; Yaniv, 1986: 161; Ma'oz, 1995: 27-28.

¹¹⁷ Ma'oz, 1995: 29.

¹¹⁸ Lesch, 1990: 64-65; Little, 1990: 61.

¹¹⁹ Ma'oz, 1995: 30. In a similar vein, Lesch points to Shishakli's 'willingness to consider a peace treaty with Israel, resettle the refugees under certain conditions, come to a mutual defence agreement with Turkey, reach an agreement with the US on military aid and join the Middle East Command.' Lesch, 1990: 53-54.

Even though, unlike Za'im, he was an Arab nationalist, Shishakli, like Za'im and several other Syrian leaders, adopted a pro-Western, notably a pro-American orientation aimed at obtaining both American military equipment and economic assistance. Shishakli continued his search for financial aid, to carry out his ambitious socio-economic reforms, and for modern weapons, to safeguard his rule against a possible Israeli attack. In return for the required American help, Shishakli was prepared, like Za'im previously, to enter a Western alliance vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and also make peace with Israel in accordance with the American demand.

The peace offer was unmistakably similar to Za'im's proposal in the sense that it stipulated a political agreement with Israel by way of the United States in return for economic and military assistance. At this point it should be made clear that the offer made by Shishakli to Israel fell short of a peace agreement as it did not include commercial and diplomatic relations. It rather resembled a non-belligerency agreement that would bring to an end the armed clashes along the border, particularly in the demilitarised zones, and pave the way for a full peace treaty after public hostility to such an idea could be overcome. As conveyed by Shishakli and his defence and subsequently prime minister, Fawzi Selu, to American, British and French diplomats as well as UNRWA officials, within the non-belligerency agreement, Syria would be ready to absorb about half a million Palestinian refugees from Jordan, the Gaza Strip and Lebanon in addition to the 80,000 refugees already in Syria on the condition that Syria would be given \$200 million for economic development. The available resources reveal that the United States welcomed the proposal and was willing to deliver some weapons as well as economic assistance.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, Shishakli's regime did not sign either any economic or military agreement with the United States or a non-belligerency agreement with Israel.

Then, if Shishakli was so keen on acquiring financial aid and technical assistance for the implementation of Syria's badly needed economic development projects, why did not he grab such a significant opportunity? This question is basically related to the broader issue of state-society relations in Syria at that time. There is no doubt that Shishakli dominated Syria's political scene from his first coup in December 1949 until his deposition in February 1954. Despite the pretension of an existence of a civilian regime

¹²⁰ Ma'oz, 1995, p. 30; Landis, 2001: 77-87.

after his first coup and the attempted transition to a civilian regime after his second coup, Shishakli reigned supreme throughout his long tenure. However, this supremacy was not automatically translated into complete autonomy from society or other political actors. The regime could not afford to ignore widespread domestic opposition to Western aid which was tied to the settlement of the Palestinian refugees in Arab countries despite United Nations resolutions calling for their return to Palestine. Any such deal was commonly equated with capitulation to Western imperialism and submission to Israel. Adherents to this view included politicians from across the political spectrum. For example, Maʿruf al-Dawalibi, a leader of the People's Party who served as the minister of national economy in early 1950, resented American attempts to bring about Arab-Israeli peace at the expense of Palestinian refugees. He declared that such an agreement would lead to the 'Judaisation of the rest of the sons of the Arab people' and that 'the Arabs would a thousand times prefer to become a Soviet republic rather than become prey to the Jews'.¹²¹ Likewise, Muslim Brotherhood leader Siba'i proposed that Arabs turn towards the Soviet Union for diplomatic support to counter Anglo-American pressures.¹²² Moreover, a movement against joining a western defence pact and arguing for Syria's neutrality in the Cold War was being led by Hawrani and the Ba'th Party and was gathering pace in attracting widespread support from the public, civil politicians as well as some military circles. The anti-Western sentiment gained so much momentum that after the outbreak of the Korean War, Syrian newspapers rejoiced in US defeats and the Anglo-American military and political delegations visiting Syria were greeted by extensive protest demonstrations.¹²³ The spread of the rumours of talks with American and French diplomats caused upheavals even within the army, the power base of Shishakli's regime and prompted a swift reaction. On 24 December 1952, the General Staff issued a communiqué announcing the uncovering of a plot against the regime and the arrest of a number of officers who 'had allowed themselves to be trapped by subversive ideas spread by certain extremist politicians' and that 'the accused had been spreading tendentious reports to the effect that the Government was about to join a western Middle East defence scheme and had agreed to settle Palestinian refugees in Syria'. Shortly after, Hawrani and the two Ba'th leaders, 'Aflaq and Bitar, secretly crossed the Lebanese border to avoid arrest and

¹²¹ Dawalibi expressed his views on the issue during an Arab League session in Cairo in an interview to an Egyptian newspaper, *al-Misri*, in April 1950. A translation of the interview is in Ro'i, 1974: 80-81.

¹²² Petran, 1972: 101.

¹²³ Kayali, 1951: 244; Seale, 1986: 123; Mu'allim, 1985: 138-139.

reiterated their allegations to the Beirut press.¹²⁴ Facing dissension in the army, disaffection among politicians who had been his closest civilian supporters, intense public opposition as well as an uncompromising Israeli leadership, Shishakli was consequently forced to shelve the peace proposal. Finally, the Qibya massacre¹²⁵ committed by Israeli Army dealt the deadly blow to the prospects of an immediate Syrian-Israeli deal. As Barnett highlights such an undertaking would run counter to the norm of Arabism that prohibited relations with Israel or dealing with the West in a way that could run against the general consensus.¹²⁶

Despite this major setback, the Syrian regime continued to seek foreign aid whenever possible even when it involved the very contentious issue of the resettlement of Palestinian refugees. Thus, in October 1952, an agreement was signed between the Syrian government and UNRWA for providing homes and livelihood for 73,000 Palestinians who had taken refuge in Syria, thereby removing them from the care of the UN agency. The project involved an eventual investment of \$30 million to be supplied by UNRWA and included a land reclamation programme. The land was to be provided by the Syrian government from state domains part of which were desert areas that could be cultivated if water were available. As a sign of awareness of the delicacy of the issue, both parties refrained from calling the project 'resettlement' but referred to it as a project of 'rehabilitation' or a 'project for the ameliorating the condition of refugees and making them self-supporting'.¹²⁷

UNRWA succeeded in concluding similar agreements with some other Arab states including Egypt and Jordan but failed to realise its 'refugee rehabilitation programme' by June 1954, the deadline set for it by the UN General Assembly. As the director of the

¹²⁴ Seale, 1986: 127; Abu Jaber, 1966: 32. While in Lebanon in exile, these three leaders decided to join forces and effected the merger of their parties. The new political organisation was henceforth called the 'Arab Socialist Ba'th Party' (*Hizb al-ba'th al-'arabi al-ishtiraki*). Notably, for its basic programme, it adopted the Ba'th's constitution of 1947 without any alteration. The Constitution of the Ba'th Party (*al-Dustur al-hizbi*) is widely available either in brochure form or in party publications. English translations by Sylvia Haim are available in both Haim, 1962: 233-241 and Abu Jaber, 1966: 167-174.

¹²⁵ The incident took place in October 1953, when Israeli troops dressed as 'irregulars' attacked the Jordan-held West Bank village of Qibya, killing around 42 men, women and children and injuring 15 other. This attack, led by then Major Ariel Sharon, came in retaliation for the murder of an Israeli woman and two children. The outcry inside Syria was intense, prompting the Syrian regime to put its army on alert and send two-third of its strength to the Israeli front. The killings caused such dismay that the USA, Britain and France led the condemnation of Israel within the Security Council and agreed to express their 'strong censure'. See Lesch, 1990: 76; Khouri, 1966: 438; Ma'oz, 1995: 47.

¹²⁶ Barnett, 1998.

¹²⁷ *MEE*, November 1952: 12; United Nations, 1954: 76-77.

agency stated in his report, UNRWA had received no cash in the year preceding the dateline for its 'rehabilitation' projects and that pledges by the United States and the United Kingdom, the two major donors, to UNRWA for that purpose had remained unpaid. Meanwhile, the Agency had used its accumulated funds to sponsor two small projects on marginal lands at Ramadan and Dabaa in Syria but the results were disappointing and the costs higher than expected due to the nature of soil and the lack of water. Moreover, 466 refugee families benefited from 'small self-support grants'.¹²⁸ A development which took place during the year [July 1953-June 1954] covered by the Agency's report but not mentioned in it is in order here: Shishakli was driven from his country by a military insurrection in February 1954. Neither the Syrians nor the Western states were to seriously raise the issue of resettlement of refugees in Syria again.

4.6. End of Shishakli's Regime and Concluding Remarks

The sequence of events which brought down Shishakli's regime was set off by a student demonstration which started in Aleppo in December 1953 and spread to Hama, Homs and Damascus.¹²⁹ As Clapham explains, in the Third World context, where regimes are already precarious, a student demonstration over an astonishingly apparent triviality may display its lack of nerve and trigger events that lead to the collapse of the regime.¹³⁰ Hence, the clash of students with the police were followed by disturbances in Jabal Druze which were caused by the arrest of Mansour al-Atrash, a member of the Ba'th Party and son of the leader of the Druze community, Sultan al-Atrash, for distributing leaflets against the regime. Suspecting a link between all these events and opposition's plans to overthrow the regime, the authorities devised strong countermeasures. An expedition of the Syrian Army was ordered to Jabal Druze, but its indiscriminate attacks on the population augmented Druze hostility to the regime. Furthermore, martial law was proclaimed and the leaders of political parties were arrested while Atasi, the former President of the Republic, and Sultan al-Atrash, a popular hero who had distinguished himself in the 1925 revolt against the French, were put under house arrest at the end of January 1954. While the upheaval seemed to subside, Shishakli abolished the censorship on the press which had come into effect on

¹²⁸ United Nations, 1954: 76-77.

¹²⁹ The students demonstrated in protest of a play presented at the American Secondary School in Aleppo. The play was regarded as being offensive to Arab honour. Ziadeh, 1957: 137-139; Seale, 1986: 134-136.

¹³⁰ Clapham, 1985: 83.

the declaration of the martial law, lifted the curfew on the Jabal and tried to come into terms with the imprisoned politicians but they did not compromise. On 25 February 1954, an army insurrection began in Aleppo and spread to garrisons all over Syria except that of Damascus. However, Shishakli preferred not to fight, resigned and left Syria under a safe conduct.¹³¹

¹³¹ Shishakli took refuge at the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Beirut and later, on 27 February 1954, left for Riyadh. He was shot dead near his farm in Brazil on 27 September 1964 where he had been living since 1960. His assassin was a Druze who was thought to be acting to take the revenge of the repression in the Jabal Druze ten years earlier. Seale, 1986: 147, note 20; Be'eri, 1970: 71.

This chapter has shown that despite the impressive economic growth and the significant increase in the resource base of the state experienced during the period under question, Syria continued to be afflicted by structural weaknesses. Consequently, it has demonstrated that the People's Party which became the dominant political force in the aftermath of the Hinnawi coup tended to sacrifice Syria's independence and support unity with Iraq as a solution to this vital problem, the subsequent regimes moulded by Shishakli sought to procure foreign financial aid and technical assistance in order to achieve a breakthrough in economic development that would in turn help sustain the Syrian state and consolidate his rule. While the moves to open the way to unity with Iraq led to the formation of a counter political coalition and were eventually brought to an end by a military coup, Shishakli's failure to implement his peace proposal which rested on the settlement of Palestinian refugees in Syria testifies that norms of Arabism, and state-society relations have to be taken seriously especially in precarious and unconsolidated regimes. In this respect, it is notable that although Shishakli distinguished himself as Syria's 'strong man' after his coups, he could not overcome intense domestic opposition to a peace plan that was equated with capitulation to Western imperialism and submission to Israel even if it would have helped bridge the structural gap between the country's earning capacity and the amounts required to meet long-term investment needs. Therefore, the failure of the People's Party to bring about Syria's union with Iraq and Shishakli's failure to implement his peace proposal and the underlying reasons behind both projects point to the significance of inside-out explanations that integrate political processes of a state and its socio-economic structure.

On the other hand, if the People's Party and Shishakli operated under favourable economic conditions and were not exposed to much adverse foreign meddling for the best part of their rule, the same can not be said, as we shall see in the next chapter, for the ruling elites that came to power in the aftermath of Syria's fourth post-independence coup. This can be taken as an indication of the enormity of the challenges that lay ahead of them.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Poisoned Chalice and Foregone Sovereignty, 1954-1958

5.1. Introduction

This chapter covers the regime of parliamentary governments which took over power following the overthrow of Shishakli's regime in February 1954 and ruled Syria until the formal approval of the union of Syria and Egypt on 5 February 1958. The chapter opens with a political overview that introduces the contending elites of the period and the main socio-economic and foreign policy issues that brought them into confrontation. This overview also brings up cases which illustrate the overlapping nature of domestic politics and foreign policy such as the fall of more than one government because of what could be categorised as foreign policy issues or the co-operation of Syrian and non-Syrian actors in the conspiracies that aimed to bring down the legitimate government in Damascus. The chapter then moves to the examination of the main economic trends and the major factors that hindered sustainable economic development.

The economic development programmes considered in this section are of a particular interest because they encompassed the projects that were regarded central to Syria's development while their proposed sources of financing pointed to the acknowledgment of the need for the mobilisation of external resources. The remaining of the chapter focuses on the quest for additional resources and includes the consideration of the root causes of the drive for trade agreements and their effect on Syria's direction of trade; the renewal of the pipeline agreement with the IPC and the impact of the Suez crisis on Syria's oil transit revenues; the rejection of a World Bank loan; the outcome of the efforts to derive economic benefits from what could be taken as a hard case issue of 'high politics'; the elevation of an issue of 'low politics' to the ranks of 'high politics'; and finally the Syrian-Soviet economic and technical cooperation agreement which covered the majority of Syrian development projects including the unparalleled Euphrates scheme as well as the unravelling of events at the end of which Syria voluntarily forewent its independence and sovereignty by merging with Nasser's Egypt. This latter episode is a prime case that exhibits the overlapping nature of domestic politics and foreign policy; the intertwining of 'considerations of plenty' and

‘considerations of power’; and the collapse of the traditional dichotomy which separates ‘high’ and ‘low’ politics.

Thus, apart from the ones already advanced earlier, the main questions that can be raised in this chapter are: How does the awarding of a contract for the construction of an industrial plant relate to FPA? Could the awarding of such a contract to a foreign firm indicate a state’s direction in its internal and external affairs? If that is the case, does every contract indicate a given state’s internal or foreign policy orientation? Similarly, do economic and technical cooperation agreements concluded to provide the required finance and the technological know-how for the implementation of development projects have the salience to be part a foreign policy analysis? Can such an agreement trigger a crisis that brings regional and global powers into a major confrontation or even to the brink of war?

5.2. A Political Overview

After Shishakli’s ouster, the 1953 constitution, which was tailored to the requirements of his own presidency, was abolished and the parliament resulting from it was dissolved. Instead, the 1950 constitution was restored and the parliament of 1950-1951 was recalled. Although it had reached the end of its term, it was agreed that the latter should continue to function until the elections which were scheduled for June 1954. Meanwhile, the octogenarian statesman, Hashim al-Atasi was re-installed as President of the Republic, a position from which he had been removed by Shishakli in December 1951. A coalition government comprising the National and People’s Parties and Independents was formed under the premiership of Sabri al-‘Asali, Secretary-General of the National Party who described his government as caretaker and stated its policy as revoking laws of the dictatorial period and conducting elections. However, ‘Asali’s coalition government failed to perform the delicate task of transition from military to parliamentary rule and was brought down before it could conduct the elections on 11 June 1954. Instead, another caretaker government formed by Said al-Ghazzi, an independent deputy, conducted the elections in September. The results of the elections heralded a substantial change in the political landscape since they revealed the decline of tradition parties such as the People’s Party which received 27 out of 142 seats whereas it had captured 45 out of 114 in 1949. Not even a coalition between the People’s Party and its traditional rival, the National Party which managed to send 14

deputies to the new chamber, could provide a majority to form a government. Conversely, the ascending forces were on the left of the political spectrum. Of these the most notable was the merged Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party which gained an unprecedented 16 to 22 seats¹ while Khalid Bakdash, the general secretary of the Communist Party, became the first Communist deputy in the Syrian Parliament. Moreover, independents who were grouped around leading political figures claimed over 60 seats and about thirty of them subsequently formed the Democratic Bloc (*al-Kutla al-dimuqratiyya*) under the leadership of Khalid al-'Azm who distinguished himself as one of the leading advocates of Syria's reformist bourgeoisie. The members of his bloc, although conservative by background, co-operated with the leftists. However, despite its improvement in parliamentary representation, the left was not in a position to take charge of Syrian politics in the autumn of 1954 as demonstrated by 'Azm's failed attempt to form the first post-election government. Instead, the seventy-seven year old Faris al-Khuri, who had not participated in the elections, formed a coalition government mainly from the People's and National parties with a number of independents. Yet, Khuri's reluctance to censure Iraq which had declared its intention to sign a military agreement with Turkey brought down his Government on 7 February 1955 and opened the way for a government more representative of the September election. A split in the National Party in two, with Lutfi al-Haffar leading one faction and Sabri al-'Asali the other, provided the opportunity for neutralists such as the Ba'ath and 'Azm and his newly formed Democratic Bloc to approach 'Asali and his followers and enlist their support to form a new government. 'Asali became Prime Minister; 'Azm, Foreign Minister and acting Defence Minister; while a Ba'athist, Wahib Ghanim, was named Minister of Health. In his policy statement, 'Asali committed his government to a policy of positive neutrality and rejected adherence to the Turkish-Iraqi pact which was signed on the same evening his government received a vote of confidence.²

The 'Asali government's neutralist stance was reinforced and the ascendancy of the left was helped, incidentally, by the assassination of a pro-Ba'ath officer, Deputy Chief of

¹ Seale, 1986: 182; Be'eri, 1970: 132; Petran, 1972: 108; Devlin, 1976: 68; Mu'allim, 1985: 175. For the text of the Decree No. 2111 of 2 October 1954 which included the full list of the elected candidates, see Afash, 1988: 64-66.

² The Turkish-Iraqi Pact, more commonly known as Baghdad Pact, was concluded on 24 February 1955. Britain joined the pact in April, Pakistan in September and Iran in October 1955. For an extensive discussion and the text of the treaty which formed the basis of the pact, see Soysal, 1990: 43-116. For a comprehensive study on Western attempts at forming a regional defence organisation in the 1950s, see Podeh, 1995.

Staff Colonel 'Adnan Malki in April 1955.³ The assailant was an army sergeant and a member of the SSNP who immediately took his own life. The SSNP's reputation as an excessively anti-communist and pro-Western party that maintained close ties with the CIA⁴ fuelled anti-Western feelings among the public and provided the pretext for allegations of a plot by the proponents of the Baghdad Pact to overthrow the neutralist government. As a consequence of the assassination, the SSNP was eliminated from Syrian public life through arrests of its members and purge of its sympathisers from the administration and the army, opening the way for the Ba'th and its followers. Moreover, communist co-operation with the Ba'th in the campaign against the SSNP and the Baghdad Pact prepared the basis for a future common front. Finally, the resolute conduct of the investigation into the alleged plot by the newly appointed chief of military intelligence, 'Abd al-Hamid Sarraj, brought another left-leaning officer into public light as one of the most influential personalities in the army.

While successful in converting its gains in elections to a substantial share in the government, in placing its supporters in the administrative machinery and in making positive neutrality a key point of Syria's foreign policy, the left more often than not failed to prevail over its conservative rivals when the latter pooled their resources and acted in concert in the parliament. This they did at critical junctures to thwart attempts at social reform which would put landed and business interests seriously at stake.

In January 1955, for example, the Ba'th Party introduced a draft social security law to the Chamber in response to the demands put forward by organised labour and the members of the civil service who had formed their first unions the preceding summer in defiance of the law.⁵ In the same summer, textile workers had already undertaken one of the longest strikes of the period and labour unions had organised demonstrations to secure a comprehensive social security law. Yet, the proposed law failed to pass due to the opposition of the conservative majority in the parliament.⁶ The enactment of a law which met central demands of the proponents of social security legislation had to wait

³ For background, analysis and results of the Malki's murder, see Seale, 1986: 238-246; Be'eri, 1970: 132-133; Petran, 1972: 111.

⁴ For SSNP-American relations see Little, 1990: 63-66 esp. note 84; Rathmell, 1995: 91-144

⁵ According to the first complete census undertaken in 1960 the total number of labour in Syria amounted to nearly 950,000. Of these, about the 54.1 % engaged in agriculture; 13.5 % in industry; 9 % in commerce; 5.5 % in construction; 3.9 % in transport; and 14.0 % in various other services. See Table 13 in Kanovski, 1977: 74.

⁶ Sadowski, 1984: 210-213.

until after the union of Syria and Egypt which ultimately put an end to the multiparty parliamentary politics.⁷

Moreover, the compelling need for agrarian reform was left, to a great extent, unsatisfied during the period of 1954-58. A draft law that sought to improve the conditions of sharecroppers and agricultural workers was submitted to the parliament in 1954 and was debated through much of the subsequent year. Its basic provisions included the replacement of verbal contracts which were terminable at will by landlords with written contracts, guaranteeing sharecroppers at least two-thirds of their crop and easing requirements for securing loans from the Agricultural Bank. Despite the efforts of the Ba'th and allied progressives, the representatives of the landed interests were joined with pro-business parliamentarians to deny the law proposal passage through the parliament.⁸ Instead, they combined their forces to raise the maximum limits on private leasing of state lands introduced under Shishakli from 200 hectares to 500 hectares. There were, as Sadowski underscored, no more than two estates in the whole country big enough to be affected by this law.⁹ In only one instance, in March 1957, the advocates of rural reform prevailed over their rivals and succeeded in pushing a limited measure through parliament: the proposal to prevent the eviction of peasants from their dwellings, a practice which became widespread since the beginning of the 1950s in the areas around the major cities where these dwellings were owned by landlords, was adopted in a session attended only by progressive deputies.¹⁰ It was the minimal nature of the proposal which made the centre-right majority withdraw from the session and allow it to be enacted into law. As in the case of industrial relations, fundamental agrarian reform measures, would await the merger of Syria with Egypt which in turn would subordinate all political forces, including the dominant coalition of landowners and capitalists in Syria, to the authority of President Jamal 'Abd al-Nasser.

Meanwhile the presidential election which took place on 18 August 1955 was another critical juncture at which the conservatives in the Syrian parliament united their forces. The two serious candidates were Foreign Minister and acting Defence Minister 'Azm and the former president Quwwatli who had been deposed by Za'im's coup d'état back

⁷ Law No. 92 was promulgated in 1959. Petran, 1972: 141; Longuenesse, 1996: 110.

⁸ Dabbagh, 1962: 5; Sadowski, 1984: 217; Jabbur, 1993: 76.

⁹ Sadowski, 1984: 215-216.

¹⁰ Dabbagh, 1962: 5; Heydemann, 1999: 79.

in 1949. While 'Azm had the backing of his Democratic Bloc, the Ba'th and the SCP, the former president received support from the People's and National Parties and conservative independents. Moreover, Quwwatli was the preferred candidate for not only Egypt and Saudi Arabia but also for Iraq and the USA against his independent minded opponent.¹¹ This configuration and the army's non-interference resulted in Quwwatli's election in the second ballot after he had failed to secure the necessary two-thirds majority on the first vote.¹² Despite his victory, President Quwwatli was to remain an observer of vital political developments rather than leading them. As Patrick Seale described, Quwwatli was 'a man whose background, record, and temperament made him unable to come to terms with, let alone control, the most dynamic elements in Syrian affairs'.¹³

The failure of their candidate prompted the withdrawal of the Ba'th Party and the Democratic Bloc from government, a development which in turn forced 'Asali to submit his government's resignation. After the new president's call for the formation of a national coalition proved unsuccessful, Said al-Ghazzi formed a coalition government composed mainly of members of the People's Party and independents. However, anti-Western feelings and neutralist trends were so strong that Ghazzi did not attempt to alter the foreign policy orientation of the previous government and declared that he saw no advantage in joining the Baghdad Pact. He also added that he would resume discussions begun by the previous government to form a tripartite pact with Egypt and Saudi Arabia provided that these negotiations formed the foundation of a new Arab Pact to include all the Arab states who wished to join.¹⁴

Ghazzi's government remained in power for nearly nine months in spite of persistent fighting between the various factions of the Chamber. Finally, it was forced to resign in early June following the lifting of a ban on wheat exports to France.¹⁵ On 14 June, former Prime Minister 'Asali managed to form a National Union Government which brought together the National and People's Parties, Munir al-'Ajlani's Constitutional Bloc (*al-Kutla al-dusturiyya*), the Ba'th and 'Azm's Democratic Bloc. The Ba'th, which

¹¹ 'Azm bitterly complained in his memoirs that Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United States worked against him prior to the presidential election. 'Azm, 1973, 2: 456-457.

¹² Seale, 1986: 252.

¹³ Ibid.: 252.

¹⁴ Torrey, 1964: 293-294; Podeh, 1995: 164.

¹⁵ Petran, 1972: 115.

had secured just the Ministry of Health in 'Asali's February 1955 government, this time obtained the two vital posts of Foreign Affairs and National Economy.¹⁶

In less than a month after the formation of 'Asali's cabinet a ministerial committee to undertake federal unity talks with Egypt was formed to fulfil the Ba'th's condition for participation government and a resolution in support of the government's decision to open federal unity talks with Egypt was adopted by the Chamber.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Egyptian lukewarm attitude and the acceleration of the Suez crisis put the idea of union on the back burner even though public support in Syria considerably increased following Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company (Compagnie Universelle du Canal de Suez) in July and his eventual diplomatic triumph following the Tripartite Aggression against Egypt (the Suez War).

The advances of the Ba'th and other leftist elements caused alarms both within and outside Syria and led to the organisation of covert counter-measures by some of their adversaries. In the autumn of 1956, a group of right-wing politicians in Syria and exiles outside the country conspired to overthrow the Syrian regime by force. The plot was supported by Iraq and preparations proceeded with the connivance of the United States and Britain. Unbeknown to their partners in the conspiracy, the British tried to time it to coincide with the Anglo-French backed Israeli attack on Egypt scheduled for 29 October. However, the Syrian Army Intelligence uncovered the plot and detained the conspirators it managed to capture on the eve of the Tripartite Aggression against Egypt. The following military trial broke the power of the People's Party and weakened the traditional conservative forces in Syria.¹⁸ Following the discovery of the plot, Hawrani and 'Azm took the lead in the formation of a Parliamentary National Front. Some 65 deputies, including Communist Party leader Bakdash, ultimately subscribed to the Front while the People's Party refused to participate. On 31 December 1956 Prime Minister 'Asali reshuffled his cabinet to exclude the People's Party and the Constitutional Bloc due to the involvement of some of their leaders in the plot. The key

¹⁶ For the composition of the cabinet, see Seale, 1986: 258, note 14; Mu'allim, 1985: 201, note 2.

¹⁷ Text of the resolution is reproduced in Mu'allim, 1985, Document No. 26: 369.

¹⁸ 12 of the accused were sentenced to death and many others received long-terms of imprisonment. After appeals of clemency, the death sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. 'Adnan al-Atasi of the People's Party, Mikhail Ilyan of the National Party and Munir al-'Ajlan of the Constitutional Bloc were among the indicted who lost their seats in the Chamber. The episode is extensively covered in Seale, 1986: 263-282; Mu'allim, 1985: 204-206; Little, 1990: 66-69; Mufti, 1996: 75-79.

ministries of economy and foreign affairs remained with the Ba'ath in the new cabinet while 'Azm was given the defence portfolio. Joined by officers friendly to one or other of its member parties, the National Front formed the basis of the coalition that was, as Tabitha Petran rightly put it, 'to guide Syria's destiny in the year ahead.'¹⁹

5.3. The Economy: Trends and Obstacles

During the four-year regime of parliamentary governments, the rapid economic growth achieved in the early 1950s started slowing down. The GDP (measured in constant 1963 prices) increased from SL2,850 million in 1954 to SL3,120 million by the end of 1957, registering a total growth of 9.5 percent or an annual rise of only about 2.4 percent.²⁰ With an estimated annual population growth of about 3.3 percent and prices showing an upward trend,²¹ this expansion in the GDP indicates a decline in real per capita GDP. Moreover, although the expansion in the area under cultivation continued and rose from 3.67 million hectares in 1953 to 4.95 million hectares in 1957, or by about 34.8 percent, the irrigated area rose from 509,000 in 1953 to reach its peak of 682,000 hectares in 1956 and fell to 583,000 hectares in 1957 registering an overall increase of only 14.5 percent during the 1953-1957 period and indicating a fall in the irrigated area/cultivated area ratio during the same years.²²

As pointed out in the previous chapter, the economic growth of the previous period had been stimulated by a remarkable increase in the cultivated area and by the privately funded extension of irrigation through pumps which had made the introduction of new crops such as cotton and sugar beets possible. However, this type of extension was strictly limited by geographical considerations and susceptible to fluctuations in market prices of crops. As world prices for agricultural products entered a decline phase²³ any further extension of cultivated area and irrigation through pumps became uneconomic for private investors. Although overall productivity could be enhanced by improving agricultural methods and crop rotations, more extensive use of fertilizers, the selection and development of better seeds, these and other technical methods would not remove

¹⁹ Petran, 1972: 117.

²⁰ SSA, 1971: 472-473.

²¹ The population numbered 3.5 million in 1950 and nearly 5 million in 1963 indicating a growth rate of 3.3 percent per annum. On the other hand, the consumer price index (1963=100) rose from 89 in 1953 to 97 in 1957. IMF, 1972 *Supplement*: 222-225.

²² In fact, irrigated area's peak level registered in 1956 would not be exceeded for three more decades. See Table 9 in the Appendix.

²³ Asfour, 1969: 43.

the cardinal problem of yield fluctuation which was due to variations in rainfall in rain-fed cultivation areas. For example, as indicated in Table 10, wheat production which was registered as 965,000 metric tons in 1954 fell to 438,000 metric tons in 1955 which was a drought year and rose to over one million metric tons in 1956. Similarly, barley production which was 635,000 metric tons in 1954 dropped to 137,000 metric tons in 1955 and reached 462,000 metric tons in 1956. As agriculture provided almost 40 percent of the national income in Syria,²⁴ an element of instability tended to spread from agriculture to other sectors of the economy. The prospects of increased production and stability in agriculture would definitely be strengthened by high scale investments that would enlarge the irrigated area.

Moreover, the agrarian property and production relations with their inherent deficiencies and inequalities added to the obstacles on the way of sustained agricultural development.²⁵ The extreme inequalities in land ownership, the extensive prevalence of the feudalistic tenancy system, the deficient system of agricultural credit and also of the marketing of agricultural products all worked to intensify the unfairness of the distribution of income in the agricultural sector in favour of big landlords, merchants and moneylenders as against the small peasants, sharecroppers and agricultural workers. While undoubtedly contributing to concentration of capital in the hands of a small minority, these very factors condemned rural masses to backwardness and poverty. The need for legislation that would provide some relief to these masses, though inscribed in the 1950 constitution, was awaiting fulfilment.

Furthermore, the lack of adequate transport facilities created a major bottleneck in the economy as they did not keep pace with the expansion of production and especially with changes in the geographic pattern of agricultural output. The three existing railways,²⁶ of varying gauge, were built during the Ottoman Empire while Latakia, the only major port, had no rail link with its hinterland. Road transport which had captured most of the substantial growth in the amount of goods produced and traded in the Syrian economy were badly maintained and could hardly be used in the rainy season. While

²⁴ SSA, 1971: 484-485.

²⁵ Asfour, 1959: 23-24; Himadeh, 1951; Hinnebusch, 1989: 32-39; Khalaf, 1991: 63-71.

²⁶ These three railways were the Northern Railway, that is the Syrian section of the international railway which is better known as the Berlin-Baghdad Railway; the Hedhaz Railway and the DHP (Chemin de Fer Damas, Hama et Prolongements). The positive effect of the construction of these railways on the development of inland agriculture in Syria is underlined in Owen, 1981: 245-247.

agricultural prices remained high during most of the post-war period and Korean War years therefore providing sufficient incentive to an expansion of production in remote areas from main transport centres, farming became less profitable with the marked decline in world market prices for cereals and cotton in the following years. The burden of transport became progressively more severe for producers particularly when cereal production was cut by drought. As the IBRD mission reported, already in 1953, transport charges from the Jazira to Latakia represented about a third of the f.o.b. export price of barley and more than a fifth of that of wheat. Moreover, high transport prices increased the cost of agricultural production. For example, in the Jazira, which produced most of Syria's wheat export surplus, the price of gas and oil used for tractors and irrigation pumps was 75 to 100 percent higher than in the Homs region and gasoline for harvesters and tractors 20-25 percent higher.²⁷ Thus cheaper means of transport emerged as a crucial necessity for the economic development in Syria.

The lack of sufficient power supply was another factor hindering economic development. Although public utilities had been increasing their capacity at an annual rate of about 16 percent in the post-war period,²⁸ only less than 40 percent of the Syrians lived in towns and villages supplied with electricity and of this only about half actually used it. At the end of 1953 only 14 percent of the capacity of the public utilities consisted of hydro plants and there was no steam plant. Besides, they had no reserve capacity and suffered from an exaggerated peak load. Heavy reliance on diesel units, which were comparatively expensive to operate, increased the cost of power generation. The existing public utilities tended to generate primarily for lighting and were not capable of balancing power requirements for industry and lighting. This forced most of the large industrial power consumers to have their own power plants, a fact that raised their production costs since most of these generating units were below the capacity required for economical operation.²⁹

In addition, the narrow base of industrial supply and the low level of technical skills impeded the manufacture of competitive and diversified products, while the lack of

²⁷ IBRD, 1955: 136.

²⁸ Production of electric power increased from 47 million kwh in 1947 to 114.2 million kwh in 1953 and reached 172.3 million kwh in 1957. *Recueil de Statistiques Syriennes Comparées*, 1970: 111.

²⁹ IBRD, 1955: 122-123.

depth of the market for locally produced goods and the poverty of the masses limited demand for such products. Finally, the country was on the road to capitalist development but lacked a money and financial market which could be instrumental in channelling funds to productive economic activities.

These obstacles to sustainable economic development called for further institution building to develop Syria's financial infrastructure, large scale investment in development projects and social reform measures. However, as we have already seen deep-touching social reform legislation was blocked by the conservative majority in the Chamber. As we shall see, a development plan providing for new financial institutions and vital irrigation, transport and energy projects would be formulated. Naturally, the plan would not be accomplished without sufficient resources. But, as the following analysis attempts to demonstrate, public finances were under strain even without taking into account the funds needed for the realisation of the development plan.

5.3.1. Ordinary Budgeted Expenditures and Revenues of the Central Government

As Table 8 illustrates, state expenditures rose from SL196 million in 1953 to SL364 million in 1957 hence registering an increase of over 85 percent over the four year period while defence spending more than doubled as it surged from almost SL66 million in 1953 to SL140 million in 1957. When related items such as outlays on gendarmerie and police included, expenditure on security claimed about 45 percent of total budget expenditures during the period. The biggest increase in non-security expenditures was experienced in outlays for public debt, pensions and subsidies as they claimed 15.2 percent of total expenditures in 1957 compared to 7.3 percent in 1953. While outlays for education kept their significant share of about 17 percent, spending on health did not exceed 4 percent of total budget expenditures during the entire period.

As Table 7 depicts, ordinary budget revenues which were nearly SL217 million in 1953 reached SL337 million in 1957 and indicated an increase of about 56 percent over the four-year period. The breakdown of the ordinary budget revenues shows that direct taxation continued to provide only about a quarter of total revenue while the share of revenue from public services and oil transit fees increased at the expense of excise taxes and custom duties. Revenue from public services which generated an average of 11.6 percent of total revenue during the previous four-year period contributed to total

revenues with an average of 16.2 percent during the years 1954-1957. Receipts from petroleum which mainly consisted of pipeline transit payments made by the IPC to the Syrian government increased remarkably due to a new agreement signed in 1955 and generated about 17.1 percent of all ordinary budget revenues in 1956. However, due to the interruption of the flow of oil in the aftermath of the Suez crises these revenues were almost halved in 1957 and accounted for only about 9.7 percent of total receipts.

Taken as a whole, during the four year 1954-1957, the general trend which had been established during the post-war decade was sustained and the state continued to absorb an ever greater proportion of the national income since a constant and steady increase in expenditures and revenues of the state could be observed. However, after the materialisation of substantial budget surpluses in 1954 and 1955, the growth rate of expenditure outpaced that of revenues largely due to the increased defence spending and resulted in sizable budget deficits in 1956 and 1957.

Therefore, the budget surpluses of around SL25 million and SL20 million registered in 1954 and 1955 respectively and the subsequent SL10 million and SL28 million deficits of the following two years were a testimony to the fact that the ruling elites during this period did not have enough financial resources at their disposal to pursue ambitious economic development programmes. Not unsurprisingly, they looked for alternative ways of increasing the resources available to them. Before embarking on the task of exploring how they dealt with the arduous quest to increase financial resources, advances in the formulation of a comprehensive development programme will be examined first. The programmes that emerged in the process are of a particular interest because they embodied the projects that were regarded vital to Syria's development while their proposed sources of financing underlined the need for additional resources.

5.3.2. Formulation of Economic Development Programmes

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the need for a comprehensive development programme that would include all the projects of the government and public institutions had been well established and had also been recognised at the highest level during the presidency of Shishakli. Moreover, it was during his rule that the World Bank was asked to send a group of its experts 'to undertake a general review of Syria's economic potentialities and to submit recommendations designed to assist the government to

formulate a long-term development programme for increasing Syria's productive resources and raising the standard of living of its people.³⁰ The mission of the World Bank arrived in early February 1954 and was allowed to continue its work despite Shishakli's downfall in late February. The mission received full co-operation from Syrian officials and submitted its report in the spring of 1955. On the one hand the report praised the private enterprise for Syria's past rapid economic development and on the other hand recommended a more active role for the Syrian government in promoting economic development by the way of public investments especially in agriculture, irrigation and land reclamation as well as energy and transport or communication projects. It also suggested increased facilities for education and public health.³¹

The highlight of the report was the recommended six-year public development plan which was formulated to cover the 1955-1960 period.³² Accordingly, projected development expenditures were to total about SL986 million while all central government expenditures were estimated to reach SL1,900 million during the whole period. Despite the discernible emphasis on irrigation, energy and transportation projects to which a high proportion of the expenditures were allocated, a remarkable point is that the mission argued for the deferment of the dam project on the Euphrates river, until after 1960, maintaining that the financing of both the Euphrates and Ghab projects at the same time 'would impose an excessive burden on the resources available to the government.'³³ Another controversial point is its preference of a road programme to a rail network as a solution to the principal transport problem of moving large volume of agricultural surplus across northern Syria between Jazira and Aleppo and Latakia and its argument that it was unlikely that 'circumstances in any part of Syria will permit railway electrification on an economic basis.'³⁴ Finally, the mission assumed that Syria would ultimately consider it advantageous to accept the United States' offer of economic aid and raise one-tenth of the projected expenditures or about SL175-215 million (around \$48-63 million) by resorting to foreign aid and borrowing.³⁵

³⁰ IBRD, 1955: vii.

³¹ Ibid.: 23-25.

³² Ibid., Table 8: 175.

³³ Ibid.: 45-46.

³⁴ Ibid.: 430-436.

³⁵ Ibid.: 174-200.

In August 1955, the Syrian government accepted, in principle, most of the recommendations of the bank but preferred to cover the projects related to education and public health costing SL346 million by the ordinary expenditures of the state, to implement the programme in seven rather than six years and included projects in its plan such as a petroleum refinery which was not proposed by the World Bank mission. The seven-year economic development plan and SL668 million extraordinary budget for its finance and another programme which included projects that were still in the stage of preliminary study costing another SL343 million such as the Latakia-Kamishli railway and a dam on the Euphrates river as well as silos for cereals and construction of a port in Tartous were all included in a law that was issued on 29 August 1955.³⁶ Accordingly, and as it is shown in Table 14, of the total amount of SL668 million, some SL301 million was earmarked for new public initiatives such as water projects, road construction and improvements, aerodromes, settlement of Bedouin tribes and extraordinary expenditure on defence. Another SL68 million was destined for projects which were already under way which included construction projects, large water projects, silos, and the Yarmuk scheme. A further SL225 million covered loans and advances to public bodies such as Ghab administration, the cost of a new petroleum refinery, the payments for the nationalisation of or subsidies for the electricity system. The balance of SL73 million included participation in the Latakia Port Company and contributions to the Agricultural Bank and to the Industrial Bank which was to be created. The Government considered that over the seven-year period it would be able to raise about SL437 million internally. Of this amount, normal budgetary sources would provide SL90 million, and a further SL222 million would be found by internal loans and borrowings from the local banks. The foreign exchange cost was to be met by raising oil transit fees to SL155 million and the balance of SL77 million in the form of a loan from the World Bank.³⁷

Following the adoption of the development budget, the Syrian government set up an autonomous body, the Economic Development Committee, to plan, co-ordinate and supervise the implementation of a development programme and to frame annual and

³⁶ *ESE*, 1955: 19.

³⁷ It has been noted that the inclusion of defence expenditures or payments for nationalised companies or subsidies as items in a development budget is a matter of debate, but this inclusion has been adopted as a matter of consistency with the original source. Law No. 116 of 29 August 1955 as published in *Ibid.*: Annex 71.

biennial budgets for its execution. The Committee included a chairman and two economic and financial experts and the Permanent Secretaries of the Ministries of National Economy, Finance, Public Works and Agriculture. Moreover, a Permanent Economic Council was established to study the economic situation and potentialities of the country, to make recommendations on economic policy and trade agreements, and to review the Committee's plans and budgets and pass them to the Council of Ministers with its observations while the Economic Development Committee was required to present an annual report to the Permanent Economic Council. The Permanent Economic Council included the Minister of Economy, a representative of the Central Bank, members of the Committee and the representatives of the Syrian business community.³⁸ The composition of the Permanent Economic Council again reflected a pro-business orientation as it had been the case in the establishment of the Currency and Credit Council during Shishakli's rule.³⁹

5.4. The Quest for Additional Resources

5.4.1. The Drive for Trade Agreements

As mentioned in the previous chapter foreign trade claimed a significant portion of total trade in Syria and its national income⁴⁰ while export of agricultural products played a paramount role in meeting the foreign exchange requirements of the economy. Three main crops, namely wheat, barley and cotton, alone accounted for an average of nearly 60 percent of total value of all exports in the 1954-1957 four-year period and successive governments worked vigorously to find new markets for export surplus of these crops.⁴¹

When the drought of 1955 forced the Government to suspend export of cereals⁴² and required the import of wheat from Turkey, Australia and the United States,⁴³ Syria was faced with the threat of reduced revenue from agricultural exports. As the same year was a very good one in terms of cotton production and made around a record 90,000

³⁸ *MEE*, October 1955: 154 and December 1955: 186; IBRD, 1955: 197.

³⁹ Law No. 115 of 29 August 1955 on the establishment of the Permanent Economic Council provided for eight representatives of the private business community to be elected by their professions in a manner to be determined by a cabinet decree. Asfour, 1969: 145, note 42.

⁴⁰ Over the 1954-1957 four-year period, the value of exports averaged around 20 percent and the imports nearly 30 percent of the national income. Calculation is based on export and import values given in Table 3 on direction of trade while values for national income have been derived from *SSA*, 1973: 762-63.

⁴¹ Table 11.

⁴² *MEE*, June 1955: 90.

⁴³ *EIU/QERS*, 26 April 1956: 3.

tons of ginned cotton, more than double the average of previous years, available for export, the Syrian government got engaged in a cotton export drive.⁴⁴ While a Syrian delegation visited Germany and obtained an arrangement for the quotation of Syrian cotton at the Bremen Exchange under a special specification to broaden the market for Syrian cotton in Germany, preliminary contacts were undertaken with a view of opening trade talks with a number of foreign states, particularly those normally importing cotton.⁴⁵ Subsequently, a 6-member team was formed on 2 October 1955 for the purpose of concluding trade and payment agreements and in return made a numerically impressive record in a very short time.⁴⁶

The first agreement in this context was signed with Poland on 10 October 1955 and provided for the exchange of a wide range of Polish industrial products against Syrian agricultural surpluses and some industrial products. The duration of the agreement was set to be one year and was automatically renewable.⁴⁷ The first trade and payment agreement between the Soviet Union and Syria was signed on 9 November and stipulated, within the limits of possibilities, a balance of trade in both directions. It was based on the most-favoured-nation basis and included lists of goods the two parties wanted to trade. Accordingly, Syria was to export mainly cotton and other agricultural products while the Soviet Union was to export a wide range of mostly manufactured products including machinery and industrial equipment and pharmaceuticals.⁴⁸ Following the signing of the agreement, the Soviet Embassy in Syria opened a commercial office in Damascus and began advertising Soviet merchandise in local newspapers and paid visits to chambers of commerce and business groups in Damascus and Aleppo.⁴⁹ The following agreement was concluded with East Germany on 27 November and provided for the export of Syrian raw materials and agricultural products against East German industrial and agricultural machinery.⁵⁰ Then China entered the scene by concluding its first trade agreement with Syria on 30 November 1955 according to which the parties agreed to exchange Chinese machinery against Syrian

⁴⁴ Table 10.

⁴⁵ Such contacts were reported between a visiting Syrian parliamentary delegation and the officials of the Soviet Union and representatives of countries who were already in Syria to participate in the Damascus International Fair. *MEE*, October 1955: 154 and 170.

⁴⁶ *Middle Eastern Affairs*, 1957: 78.

⁴⁷ *ESE*, 1955: 26; *MEE*, January 1956: 10.

⁴⁸ *MEE*, January 1956: 10; *Middle Eastern Affairs*, 1957: 78; *Mizan*, February 1962: 2.

⁴⁹ *Middle Eastern Affairs*, 1957: 78.

⁵⁰ *ESE*, 1955: 26; *MEE*, January 1956: 10.

cotton, olive oil, dried fruits, tobacco, hides and textiles.⁵¹ In less than a year after the conclusion of this agreement, Syria recognised Communist China in July 1956.⁵² Romania's trade and payments agreement with Syria came on 14 January and was based on the most-favoured-nation basis. The agreement provided for exchange of mainly Syrian agricultural products against Romanian timber, paper, chemical products and pharmaceuticals, railway material and oil products. Moreover, each side decided to set up a permanent trade representation in the capital of the other country.⁵³ The last two in this series of agreements were concluded in May with Hungary⁵⁴ and in June 1956 with Bulgaria.⁵⁵

One of the principle objects of these agreements was to achieve a fairly evenly balanced trade in both directions while an important effect was the reduction of Syrian tariffs applied to the goods of other signatory states and to permit them to purchase Syrian agricultural products without payment in hard currency. Each of these agreements established a payments account, generally in US dollars or in pound sterling, through which all financial transactions were to be arranged. The maximum indebtedness each of the two parties could incur without the other having the right to claim payment in hard currency ranged from £300,000 on the Soviet agreement to \$300,000 on the Romanian agreement.⁵⁶ The time lag between the signing of an agreement and its coming into force which required the exchange of documents of ratification varied from about three months for the agreement with Romania and four months for the one with the Soviet Union to nearly fourteen months for the agreement with Hungary.⁵⁷

As Table 12 shows, until 1956, the year most of the trade agreements with the Soviet Bloc countries and China came into effect, only Poland, East Germany, Hungary, China and Yugoslavia had imported cotton from Syria and that only in very small quantities. Thus during the 1951-1955 period, when Syria's cotton exports totalled around SL740 million,⁵⁸ the share of these states did not exceed SL10.5 million, in other words

⁵¹ *MEE*, January 1956: 10; *Middle Eastern Affairs*, 1957: 78. The agreement of November 1955 was amended on 3 July 1957. *ESE*, 1957: 30.

⁵² *Scale*, 1986: 259.

⁵³ *MEE*, March 1956: 42; *Middle Eastern Affairs*, 1957: 78.

⁵⁴ *ESE*, 1956, 'Chronology': 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Middle Eastern Affairs*, 1957: 78.

⁵⁷ *ESE*, 1956: 3-4; BBC/SWB, No. 283, 28 June 1957: 21.

⁵⁸ The figures for Syria's total cotton exports for the 1951-1957 period have been taken from Table 10.

claimed less than 1.5 percent of Syria's total cotton exports while Syria's four main traditional cotton customers -France, United Kingdom, Italy and West Germany- had imported Syrian cotton worth SL590 million and accounted for over 80 percent of the value of the total Syrian cotton exports. However, while the Suez crisis and the subsequent deterioration of Syria's relations with France⁵⁹ and United Kingdom⁶⁰ resulted in a marked decline of trade between these countries in general and less Syrian cotton exports to them in particular, Syria was able to sell the surplus cotton to socialist countries and China through the above mentioned trade and payments agreements. As the combined share of France, the United Kingdom, West Germany and Italy contracted to about 60 percent of the value of Syria's total cotton exports in 1956 and dropped further to about 43 percent in 1957, the combined share of the Soviet bloc countries, Yugoslavia and China increased to over 20 percent of Syria's cotton exports in 1956 and climbed to 43.5 percent in 1957.

After the drought of 1955, Syria had very good harvests in the following two years leaving large amounts of cereal surpluses and a need to find new export outlets. Thus, in 1957, wheat crop reached a record 1,354,000 tons against 1,051,000 tons in the preceding year and nearly 735,000 tons in the 1951-1955 average.⁶¹ The export problem was further aggravated in 1956 because the Syrian government had prohibited the export of 150,000 tons of wheat early in the season⁶² and imposed, as a reaction to France's way of dealing with the Algerian struggle for independence and as a response to popular demands which had brought the Ghazzi government down, a ban on wheat exports to France.

Immediately afterwards, Chinese representatives informed the new Syrian government of 'Asali that they were ready to buy large quantities of wheat and were joined by East

⁵⁹ However, France remained Syria's leading cotton customer in 1956 and French imports of Syrian cotton were resumed in the second half of 1957 with the opening of credits by the French government for the import of 15,000 tons of Syrian cotton after discussion between the two sides in Damascus on the resumption of normal trade relations. *MEED*, 30 August 1957: 12 and 20 September 1957: 10; *MEE*, October 1957: 154.

⁶⁰ In September 1957 a British Board of Trade report announced that Syrian import, export and exchange regulations relating to trade with United Kingdom had been restored to how they had been immediately before Sues crisis although diplomatic relations between the two countries remained to be restored. *MEED*, 20 September 1957: 10.

⁶¹ See Table 10.

⁶² *MEE*, November 1956: 170.

European governments which declared their desire to buy the Syrian surplus wheat.⁶³ Subsequently, a Syrian – East German – Egyptian triangular deal was announced. Accordingly, 100,000 tons of Syrian wheat, worth about SL30 million, was to be delivered to Egypt whose cotton exports were to cover Syria's import of machinery, worth SL12 million, from East Germany.⁶⁴ In addition to that amount, East Germany decided to import another 40,000 tons of wheat directly from Syria.⁶⁵ As West Germany also agreed to buy 70,000 tons and Italy 25,000 tons, the problem of marketing the 1956 wheat surplus appeared to have been solved.⁶⁶

At the start of the campaign to export the 1957 cereal surplus, Syrian officials accused the US of working to stifle their economy by underselling wheat in its traditional markets.⁶⁷ Besides such claims, strenuous efforts resulted in another triangular deal whereby Italy, in return for 150,000 tons of Syrian hard wheat, was to supply Egypt with 210,000 tons of soft wheat which was more suitable for Egyptian requirements. Moreover, the Czech Government agreed to accept wheat in part payment of the contracts won in Syria by Czech companies and the Soviet Union pledged to purchase the otherwise un-exportable surpluses and to pay half in hard currency and the other half in goods.⁶⁸ However, despite these advances, some 500,000 tons of wheat surplus was kept for domestic consumption in Syria following the imposition of a ban on export of all cereals in April 1958. The decision was taken in anticipation that the 1958 harvest would be small owing to the irregular rains.⁶⁹

A more systematic analysis of Syria's direction of trade will help in assessing the impact of the strenuous efforts to find new outlets for the export of agricultural surplus and the resulting trade and payment agreements and whether there was a foreign trade surplus to meet the foreign exchange requirements of the Syrian development projects.

⁶³ *MEE*, August 1956: 122.

⁶⁴ The balance was to be paid in Egyptian currency. *MEE*, November 1956: 170; EIU/QERS, 25 October 1956: 2.

⁶⁵ EIU/QERS, 7 February 1957: 3.

⁶⁶ EIU/QERS, 25 October 1956: 2.

⁶⁷ Minister of National Economy Khalil al-Kallas claimed that the US had sold 500,000 tons of wheat to Syria's European customers at reduced prices. BBC/SWB, No. 262, 3 June 1957: 17. The claim was also reiterated by Prime Minister 'Asali. BBC/SWB, No. 268, 11 June 1957: 9.

⁶⁸ BBC/SWB, No. 332, 26 August 1957: 17; *MEED*, 30 August 1957: 12; EIU/QERS, 31 October 1957: 5; *MEE*, November 1957: 172.

⁶⁹ EIU/QERS, 10 May 1958: 4.

5.4.2. The Direction of Syria's Foreign Trade

As shown in Table 3 the value of exports to the Soviet bloc countries and China reached SL 95 million in 1957 and accounted for 17.3 percent of total Syrian exports in 1957 compared with 7.6 percent in 1956 and only 1.2 percent in 1955. Among them China and Czechoslovakia were the most important customers while trade with the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries was still on a rather modest scale. Among the Arab countries Lebanon remained the most important outlet for Syrian goods and retained its position as the major trading partner as it kept receiving about one-fifth of all Syrian exports until 1958. Iraq and Saudi Arabia were other major customers in the region while exports to Egypt increased sharply and reached 5.8 percent of all exports in 1957 against 1.8 percent in the preceding year and 1.1 percent in 1955. West European countries and the USA, which had purchased more than one half of Syria's total exports until 1955 received only about 40 percent of them in 1956-57. While the share of the UK in Syria's total exports dwindled from 8.5 percent in 1955 to almost 1 percent in 1957, exports to France, though halved, remained at a relatively high level by accounting for more than 10 percent of Syria's exports even in 1956 and 1957. In Europe, Italy emerged as a major export outlet as its share increased from about 5 percent in 1951-54 to over 10 percent in 1955-57.

As for imports, West European countries and the US remained by far the most important suppliers of Syria in the 1954-57 period. While the total value of their exports to Syria increased in absolute terms by over SL80 million, their share in Syria's total imports gradually dropped from 63.4 percent in 1954 to 55.4 percent in 1957. Remarkably, despite the deterioration of bilateral relations, the US continued to supply more than 10 percent of Syria's imports during the entire period. Indeed, the US was at the top of the list of Syria's most important suppliers in 1954 and 1957 and came close second in the intervening two years. On the other hand, the share of imports from France started to fall after Syria's export ban in 1955 and a similar decline was experienced in the share of imports from the UK after the Suez crisis. One beneficiary was West Germany which became one of Syria's three major suppliers in the last three years of 1954-57 period. Among the Arab countries Saudi Arabia's and Iraq's share increased mainly due to rise in Syria's oil consumption whereas Egypt remained a minor supplier. It was also notable that Lebanon which used to provide more than one-tenth of Syria's total imports in 1951-1953, gradually lost its prominence as a major

supplier as its share dropped to 4 percent of Syria's imports in 1957. Moreover, imports from the Soviet bloc countries and China remained at a low level despite registering relative increases. Czechoslovakia was the most important supplier among them while their total share in Syria's imports reached 7.7 percent in 1957 against 3.3 percent in 1953 and 2.5 percent in 1954. Imports from the Soviet Union which totalled less than SL1 million until 1956 amounted to about SL11.5 million in 1957 and accounted for 1.9 percent of Syria's total imports.

One discernible feature of trade with the Soviet bloc countries and China is that exports to these countries were almost twice as high as imports from them. Similarly, Syria enjoyed a large surplus from its trade with Arab countries while Syria's imports from other countries and particularly from West European countries and the US were out of proportion to exports to these countries.

As the figures in Table 4 indicate, in the period 1954-1957, total exports reached SL2,000 million while the imports for the entire period totalled about SL1,900 million according to the custom figures or about SL2,600 million according to the adjusted figures.⁷⁰ An evaluation of the adjusted figures, which are much closer to depicting the real picture, shows that Syria experienced substantial trade deficits in each year of the 1954-57 period. Besides, when the aggregate export figures for the 1951-1953 and 1954-1957 periods are compared they indicate a remarkable slowing down of the growth in exports: while total exports had increased by an average of about 12 percent annually in the first period, an annual growth of only 4.4 percent was registered in the latter period. Overall, a trade deficit of SL611 million was experienced during the entire 1954-1957 period and made it impossible to rely on export receipts for foreign currency requirements of planned economic development projects.

⁷⁰ As mentioned earlier in the previous chapter, the Syrian authorities used to base the valuation of imports on the official exchange rate which was about 40 percent lower than the prevailing free market exchange rate. Starting from 1957, this practice, which had the effect of undervaluing imports in terms of Syrian pound, was abandoned. This new valuation of imports using the free market rate had the consequence of wiping out the former statistical foreign trade surplus which was unrealistic. See *MEE*, June 1958: 87. It should be noted that this switch did not affect the valuation of exports in terms of Syrian pound since Syrian authorities had always used the free market rate for this purpose. Hence, Table 4 includes both the figures given in the *SSA* and the adjusted figures for 1954, 1955 and 1956 in US dollars as provided by the IMF.

5.4.3. The New Pipeline Agreement

Even before the adoption of the extraordinary budget for development and setting up institutions for the implementation of the projects listed in the budget, the Syrian government had put a new vigour to the three-year-old demand for higher transit fees from the IPC whose pipeline system crossed Syria in order to increase its foreign exchange earnings.⁷¹ The negotiations with the IPC started on 11 January 1955 but ran into numerous difficulties as the IPC tried to avoid dramatic increases while the Syrian side used various means to exert pressure on the IPC. Thus, the Syrian parliament empowered the Government to stop oil flowing through the Syrian territory. 'Days of oil' were organised in September in all major cities throughout Syria during which meetings and demonstrations took place in support of higher royalties. Negotiations were also suspended on two occasions, in May and in October, but after intense traffic between Damascus, London and Baghdad they finally ended in an agreement which increased Syrian revenues from the IPC pipeline system by four to five times compared with the provisions of the old agreement. The new agreement which was signed on 29 November 1955 put the pipeline transit payments to Syria on a ton-mile basis and at an estimated throughput of 26 million tons payments were expected to reach \$18.2 million (SL65 million) in 1956. The company also agreed to pay \$23.8 million (SL85 million) retroactive for the previous three years and to continue its annual payment of \$1.4 million as compensation for maintaining the security of the line. The sense of triumph on the Syrian side was such that the two chief Syrian negotiators were decorated with the highest Syrian medal in appreciation for the services they rendered to their country.⁷²

But before Syria could reap the benefits of the renewed agreement which could finance half the requirements of the extraordinary development budget if the oil flow was uninterrupted and if the whole sum was reserved for that end, a series of events which culminated in a full-scale war in the region began to unroll in the second half of 1956.

⁷¹ The IPC had two pipeline systems carrying oil from its oilfields in Iraq to the Syrian terminal of Banias and Tripoli in Lebanon. The first system carried oil through a 30-inch line to Banias while two lines, the first 12 inch and the second 16 inch carried oil to Tripoli. After the introduction of the profit-sharing agreement in 1952 in Iraq, both Syria and Lebanon demanded that a similar sharing formula applied to pipeline profits. Profits being the difference between posted price of oil at the Mediterranean ports and the posted price of equivalent oil at the Gulf. See EIU/QERS, 9 May 1957: 2; Penrose and Penrose, 1978: 390.

⁷² *ESE*, 1955: 19-20; *MEE*, January 1956: 14; EIU/QERS, 26 April 1956: 2.

5.4.4. Suez Crisis and Economic Implications for Syria

On July 26 President Nasser announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company as a response to the cancellation of a joint loan offer by the United States, European states and the World Bank to finance the central element in Egypt's development programme, the High Dam at Aswan.⁷³ During the subsequent crisis the Syrian government offered its full support to Egypt. In order to help Egypt in case of an attack against it, a popular resistance force was created under the wings of the Syrian army while the London conference which was called by the foreign ministers of Britain, France and the United States to put the Canal under international control was boycotted by the Syrian government alongside other Arab states. Following the Israeli attack on Egypt on 29 October, Syria proposed to counter-attack Israel but was dissuaded by Cairo. After the intervention of Britain and France on 31 October, Syria broke diplomatic relations with them and President Quwwatli flew to Moscow on a previously arranged visit where he received assurances and moral support in case Syria was also attacked.⁷⁴

Economically the most important result of the Suez crisis for Syria was the blowing up of the three IPC pumping stations in Syria by workers and army officers on the night of November 2.⁷⁵ While the Syrian government denied responsibility for the destruction and attributed it to 'lawless elements', it did not permit IPC technicians to examine the damage in order to assess the prospects of repair and announced that it would not allow work to begin until the Anglo-French forces had withdrawn from Port Said. Later, the commencement of work was made contingent on the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula. However, four days after this announcement, officials of the company were allowed to begin inspection on December 30.⁷⁶ Not unexpectedly, when the required political conditions were fulfilled, the Syrian government promptly informed the IPC that the repair of the pumping stations and the pumping of oil through the pipeline could begin. The Company's engineers entered Syria on 8 March 1957, only two days after the permission and accomplished the diversion around the damaged pumping stations so rapidly that oil started flowing on 11

⁷³ See Vatikiotis, 1991: 392-393; Yapp, 1996: 402-410.

⁷⁴ Seale, 1986: 260-262; Petran, 1972: 116.

⁷⁵ Van Dusen, 1971: 220-221; Lesch, 1990: 198.

⁷⁶ EIU/QERS, 5 February 1957: 2.

March. Nevertheless, only about 11 million tons of crude could be pumped instead of the normal capacity of about 26 million tons annually.⁷⁷

The financial loss to Syria can be estimated at something between SL35 million to SL45 million (or between \$10-13 million), the amount that would have been received as transit fees if the flow of oil had not been interrupted. The stoppage also meant loss of employment for about 3,000 Syrian employees of the IPC. Initially, the Syrian government tried to shift the financial burden to the IPC as the Finance Minister suggested that the IPC should pay transit fees for 1957 at the level they would have attained had the flow of oil not been interrupted. However, this demand had no legal justification since the Syrian government had accepted the responsibility for the safety and the protection of the pipeline both in the original convention of 1931 and the 1955 agreement which provided for annual payments by the IPC for these services. Another attempt by the Syrian government to minimise losses was observed when a law was passed ordering the IPC to re-employ all workers discharged during the interruption period and pay them back wages for the stoppage period.⁷⁸ These attempts did not come as a surprise in the view of the fact that the financial loss due to interruption amounted to one-tenth of government revenues in 1957 and dealt a decisive blow to the seven-year extraordinary budget. This significant revenue loss resulted in stoppage or postponement of development projects.⁷⁹ The only significant progress was observed towards the completion of the Latakia Port project as a sum of SL2 million was allocated to it: a Swedish firm was entrusted with the installation of grain storage and handling facilities; and an Austrian firm was awarded a contract for cargo hoists and lifts. On the other hand, contracts with British and French companies, such as the contract for aerial photography of 50,000 square kilometres in the north-east Syria awarded to a British firm, were cancelled.⁸⁰

5.4.5. The Struggle over the Baghdad Pact: A Complementary Dimension

The Turkish-Iraqi agreement which formed the nucleus of the Baghdad Pact was signed on 24 February 1955. Although presented as a regional defence framework to contain the Soviet Union in the Middle East, the Pact was primarily intended to perpetuate

⁷⁷ *MEE*, March 1957: 46; *EIU/QERS*, 9 May 1957: 2.

⁷⁸ *EIU/QERS*, 9 May 1957: 2.

⁷⁹ *MEE*, February 1957: 27.

⁸⁰ *EIU/QERS*, 5 February 1957: 6.

British presence and influence in the region. For Iraq it presented an opportunity to renew its bid for Arab leadership. Egypt and Saudi Arabia had opposed the pact while it had been discussed and once it was formed they joined forces to foil British and Iraqi ambitions. The ensuing struggle between two rival camps provided the Syrian government with an opening to derive economic benefits and gave rise to an attempt to get others foot part of Syria's increasing defence bill.

Following the formation of the first post-election 'Asali government which advocated a policy of positive neutrality, an Egyptian delegation led by Minister of National Guidance Salah Salim was received in Damascus. Following the subsequent week-long talks the parties issued a joint communiqué on 2 March that rejected adherence to the Turkish-Iraqi Pact and declared their intention to establish an alternative all-Arab defence and economic co-operation pact.⁸¹ The delegation dispatched to Jordan and Lebanon failed to convince the governments of these states to join the proposed all-Arab pact. Conversely in Saudi Arabia it found an eager audience and a tripartite declaration was issued on 5 March in support of the Egyptian led pact. As David W. Lesch described, 'Egypt had met Iraq's challenge, countering it with its political triumph in Syria and apparent success in arranging an alliance of its own as an Arab alternative to the Baghdad Pact.'⁸²

The subsequent Iraqi and Turkish threats and troop movements along their border with Syria failed to cause Damascus to alter its course. Instead, their intimidating actions brought the Soviet Union out into open in support of Syria for the first time outside the confines of the United Nations: the Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov declared on 23 March 1955 that the Soviet Union was ready to provide Syria with 'aid in any form whatsoever for the purpose of safeguarding Syria's independence and sovereignty.'⁸³

Despite the declaration of intention to form a trilateral pact, the differences between the Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia eventually proved to be insurmountable. Although a committee was formed to draw up a text of the tripartite agreement and a draft was completed, none was ever published due to the diverging motives of the parties. While

⁸¹ Text of the communiqué is reproduced in Mu'allim, 1985, Document No. 21: 352-353.

⁸² Lesch, 1990: 127.

⁸³ Ibid.: 137.

Egypt's intention was co-ordination of foreign policies without further commitments, Syria wanted to derive economic benefits in addition to defensive benefits from the pact by incorporating an economic dimension to it and Saudi Arabia was unwilling to relinquish sovereignty. On the critical issue of common defence budget both Saudi Arabia and Egypt refused to allocate 10 percent of their budget while Syria agreed; also both objected to economic unity with Syria.⁸⁴ As the Ba'th leader 'Aflaq told Patrick Seale about their first official encounter with the Egyptians in February-March 1955:⁸⁵

We had a hand in preparing the draft of the Egyptian-Syrian-Saudi pact ... It foundered in interminable discussions stretching over months on the question of a common defence budget and a common general staff. Egypt objected that she was poor and could not pay. Saudi Arabia was ready to pay but was reluctant to abandon any sovereignty.

After the initial failure to agree on common defence budget, the Syrian Prime Minister 'Asali suggested focusing on the economic aspect of the pact and sent Fakhir al-Kayyali, the minister of national economy, to Riyadh and Cairo in June and July 1955. In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia pledged to grant Syria a \$10 million loan and to postpone repayments on the previous loan given in 1950. Moreover, both Saudi Arabia and Egypt agreed to open their markets to Syrian industrial products. However, when an Egyptian delegation arrived in Syria during August, differences proved difficult to overcome in determining which products the agreement was to apply to.⁸⁶

The powerful pro-Egyptian current generated by the announcement of the Egyptian-Czech arms deal on 27 September 1955 led to the abandonment of the protracted negotiations for a trilateral pact and to the conclusion of bilateral agreements which took into account the special circumstances of each pair of signatories. In this context, Syria signed a mutual defence agreement with Egypt on 20 October and an economic agreement with Saudi Arabia on 9 November.⁸⁷

According to the Syrian-Egyptian agreement, both states would consider any armed attack on one of them as an attack against both and take all necessary measures, and use

⁸⁴ Podeh, 1995: 156.

⁸⁵ Seale, 1986: 225.

⁸⁶ Podeh, 1995: 156.

⁸⁷ A Saudi-Egyptian defence agreement was also signed on 27 October 1955. See Podeh, 1995: 164-171.

all means, to repel it. Moreover, the agreement provided for the establishment of a Supreme Council to consist of the Foreign and Defence ministers of the parties, a Defence Council to consist of the Chiefs-of-Staff and a Joint Command to be responsible for the forces allocated to it. Finally, each state was to bear half the costs of the Joint Command. Egypt was to pay 65 percent of the cost of required military installations and bases that were to be set up in the Syrian territory, while the balance was to be paid by Syria.⁸⁸

The rather swift conclusion of a bilateral agreement which lacked an economic co-operation dimension was probably due to Syrian expectations that, after the Czech arms deal, Egypt could act as a supplier of Soviet arms to Syria. Moreover, while the proposed tripartite pact had been perceived as being directed against the Baghdad Pact, the bilateral agreement directly targeted Israel and was less likely to provoke Iraqi antagonism. Finally it served to defuse the pressure on the Syrian government on the part of the public opinion, the army, and the Ba'ath to enter into some kind of alliance with Egypt. Nevertheless, not only the Syrian request of Soviet arms was reportedly rejected by President Nasser,⁸⁹ but also the Syrian-Egyptian defence pact remained rather symbolic as most of its provisions for military co-operation were not put into effect.

The agreement with Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, provided for a Saudi interest-free loan of \$10 million and the postponement of the repayment of the \$6 million granted in 1950. The repayments on these loans were to be made by means of Syrian products in ten instalments beginning in December 1961. Moreover, Saudi Arabia undertook to open its market to Syrian industrial products.⁹⁰

The Israeli response to these agreements came in the form of a massive attack on Syrian positions at Lake Tiberias on the night of 11 December in which 37 Syrian soldiers and 12 civilians were killed and over 30 were taken prisoners.⁹¹ As Moshe Ma'oz explains, the Israeli raid 'was particularly directed at exposing Syria's and (Egypt's) military

⁸⁸ *Middle East Journal*, 1956: 77.

⁸⁹ Podeh, 1995: 166, note 113.

⁹⁰ *MEE*, January 1956: 10 and July 1956: 106; Petran, 1972: 114.

⁹¹ The pretext for the 'Operation Oil Leaves', as it was called by the Israeli authorities, was an alleged firing from a Syrian position on an Israeli police boat on 10 December that had resulted in no casualty. See Khouri, 1963: 24-25; Shlaim, 1983: 195-196; Ma'oz, 1995: 51-52.

weakness and warning it that its military pact with Egypt could become a liability rather than an asset.⁹² In the event, Cairo's help was limited to solidarity messages and promises of support in the event of a full-scale Israeli invasion. Yet, the rising tension drew Syria closer to the Egypt which had suffered from a similar 'reprisal' raid a couple of days before the joint Syrian-Egyptian communiqué of March 1955.⁹³ Moreover, it added weight to calls for Soviet arms and led to the exacerbation of Syria's defence burden.⁹⁴

In sum, attempts to draw Syria into an-anti Soviet regional defence organisation failed miserably. Syria did not only align with anti-Baghdad pact Arab states of the region but was also drawn closer to the Soviet Union which extended diplomatic support to counter Iraqi and Turkish hostility and responded favourably to requests for arms. Clearly the dynamics of balance of power politics were at work here. Moreover, Israel's gruesome entry to the scene in the aftermath of the Syrian-Egyptian agreement did not drive a wedge between Damascus and Cairo. But it had the effect of cancelling out Syria's material gains from its alliance with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The aggravation of the Israeli threat induced Syrian leaders to increase defence expenditures and to step up arms purchases from Soviet bloc countries. As part of this drive, the Saudi loan of \$10 million was assigned to the military⁹⁵ whereas the loan of 1950 had helped to inaugurate the Latakia port project. All these meant that Syria was not left in a better position to allocate more of its resources to development projects. The search for additional resources would continue.

5.4.6. The Rejection of the World Bank Loan

As it has already been mentioned above, the seven-year extraordinary development budget stipulated that part of the foreign exchange requirements would be obtained from the World Bank in the form of a loan amounting to SL77 million (about \$21 million). Accordingly, the Syrian Government asked for a \$25 million loan from the World Bank

⁹² Ma'oz, 1995: 51.

⁹³ On 28 February 1955, the Israeli army carried a large scale attack on an Egyptian military post in Gaza, killing 38 soldiers and injuring 31 others. The raid was allegedly undertaken in response to increased border incidents and tensions due to aggressive Egyptian activities. However, the United Nations Truce Supervision Commission Chief of Staff denied the Israeli claim and Israel was condemned by the United Nations Security Council. See Khouri, 1966: 440. For Israel's motives and consequences of the raid, see Shalim, 1983: 189-190; Ma'oz, 1995: 48-49.

⁹⁴ Thus, budgeted defence expenditures, which had risen from SL66 million in 1953 to SL75.5 million in 1954 and to SL81.5 million in 1955, were set at SL120 million in 1956. See Table 8 in the Appendix.

⁹⁵ Petran, 1972: 114.

and following a meeting in Damascus in the summer of 1955 between the Syrian Minister of Economy and a representative of the Bank, it was announced that the Bank had expressed its readiness to grant Syria a \$10 million loan to be used to finance development schemes.⁹⁶ As this amount fell short of the Syrian demand, further representations and negotiations followed and at the end of 1955 the Middle East representative of the Bank informed the Syrian Finance Minister that the Bank had approved the requested \$25 million loan.⁹⁷

The World Bank's conditions were reported to involve a duration of twenty years for the loan and an interest rate of 4.74 percent as well as an additional 0.75 percent interest on amounts put at the disposal of the Syrian government, but not used yet. Moreover, the Bank stipulated that contracts for work under the loan should be offered only to firms of countries which were members of the Bank thus excluding the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. So, the Syrian delegation sent to Washington to negotiate the terms of the loan found the conditions of the proposed loan unacceptable and recommended its refusal.⁹⁸ Rather than compromising, especially on the sticking point of exclusion of firms from socialist countries, the Bank subsequently decided to raise the interest on its loan by a further 0.25 percent. Fakhir al-Kayyali, the Syrian Minister of Public Works and Communications, later explained Syria's reaction.⁹⁹

We have allocated sums in the extraordinary budgets in order to implement certain projects which would increase our national income ... We have actually carried out some projects. But we could not realise part of the other projects, as we did not possess the money needed for their realisation ... We tried to obtain a loan from the World Bank, but the World Bank, after expressing its readiness to grant Syria any loan it required, laid down severe conditions which the country could not bear. The Bank also asked for interest exceeding five percent, in addition to other conditions. When the Syrian negotiators found that there was no benefit to be obtained from this loan, especially since the Syrian economy would not be able to bear such interest, it became necessary for us to look for another source to acquire the necessary funds for the realisation of these projects.

⁹⁶ *MEE*, August 1955: 122.

⁹⁷ *MEE*, December 1955: 186.

⁹⁸ *MEE*, March 1956: 42; EIU/QERS, 26 April 1956: 2.

⁹⁹ BBC/SWB, No. 332, 26 August 1957.

While the World Bank decided to harden its stance, reports of a Soviet loan, repayable over 20 years at 2 percent interest rate, to Egypt for the financing of the High Dam were in circulation¹⁰⁰ and an offer of low interest bearing long-term development loan had been made to the Syrian Prime Minister in June 1956 by the visiting Soviet Foreign Minister Shepilov.¹⁰¹ In those circumstances it is probable that the Syrian cabinet saw no urgency for contracting a comparatively expensive loan. The refusal to accept the World Bank loan under those conditions was announced by Prime Minister 'Asali who added that they would contract foreign loans if it proved necessary to implement the development projects.¹⁰² Therefore, despite this refusal, the door remained open for further exertions in pursuit of external resources.

5.4.7. The Award of Contracts: From 'Low Politics' to 'High Politics'

As Syria lacked the necessary technology, equipment and technical experts, post-independence Syrian governments depended on the services of foreign firms or institutions to undertake development work. Some of these firms or institutions prepared studies, some undertook development projects, others supervised the work of foreign contractors while in some cases foreign firms were taken as partners by public companies to implement projects.

As mentioned earlier, comprehensive studies such as the one delivered by the British firm of engineering consultants, Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners as long ago as 1946, or the report submitted by the IBRD mission in 1954 had been commissioned by Syrian authorities and had been used either for implementation of suggested projects such as the Latakia Port and Ghab Project or in the preparation of economic development programmes such as the one adopted for 1955-1961. Moreover, foreign firms such as Nedeco of the Netherlands had been employed to undertake studies of individual projects as in the case of Ghab valley irrigation, electrification and development scheme; a West German company participated in the National Company for Drilling Works and Artesian Wells by providing half of the capital in the form of machinery and equipment needed for the operation of the company,¹⁰³ and finally, as demonstrated by the examples of the Yugoslav firm Trudbenik for the construction of the first stage of

¹⁰⁰ *MEE*, July 1956, p. 101.

¹⁰¹ BBC/SWB, No. 268, 11 June 1957.

¹⁰² *MEE*, August 1956: 122; EIU/QERS, 9 August 1956: 4.

¹⁰³ *MEE*, December 1953: 11.

Ghab scheme¹⁰⁴ and Pomorsko Gradjevno Pouzece of the same country for the construction of Latakia Port,¹⁰⁵ contracts had been awarded to foreign companies for the implementation of development projects. The distribution of these contracts shows that they were almost evenly shared by the West European companies and companies of the socialist countries as Danish, Italian, Belgian, Swiss, Swedish, West German, Yugoslav, East German, Bulgarian firms were employed to provide studies or implement or supervise the implementation of projects or in some cases simply to provide material and equipment for these projects.¹⁰⁶

In the absence of any suggestion that the 'nationality' of a company had been a crucial factor in determining the winner of above contracts, virtually no political relevance had been attributed to the issue. However, the awarding of a contract for building an oil refinery to a Czechoslovak company after a long bidding war especially with an Anglo-American firm caused much controversy and was alarmingly perceived as a sign of Syria's drift towards the Soviet Bloc.¹⁰⁷ According to the contract which heralded Czechoslovakian participation in Syrian development efforts, the proposed refinery was to have an output capacity of 1 million tons of crude oil. When finished, it would completely meet local demand for oil products, as Syrian consumption of oil products was 864,000 tons a year. The refinery was to be built within 27 months from the date of the contract at a total cost of SL54 million, of which 10% was payable within 14 days of the signature of the contract, 15% was payable during implementation of the work and 10% was payable on completion. The remainder was to be paid in seven annual instalments, ending in 1966, with an interest rate of 3%. Compared to other offers, the Czech offer was the cheapest and the most advantageous in terms of repayments.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ *ESE*, 1955: 19.

¹⁰⁵ *ESE*, 1956, Appendix III: 1.

¹⁰⁶ A Danish firm was employed to supervise the construction of the Latakia Port; an Italian company was given the task of studying the 250-km road project between Rakka (on the Euphrates)-Tel Tamer (on the Khabour)-Kamishli (in the Jazira) while another Italian firm undertook the construction of canals and draining of marshes in the in the Ghab Region; a Belgian company was employed to study the Latakia-Kamishli railway project; a Swiss firm was awarded the contract to study the dam project on the Orontes; a Swedish company was awarded the contract to dig 10 wells in southern Syria; a West German firm undertook the earthworks for the opening of a new bed for the Orontes River and draining of marshes alongside the river while another West German firm provided equipment for the silos build by a Bulgarian firm in the Latakia Port; an East German company won the contract for the delivery of 100 railway wagons for the transport of cereals; and a Bulgarian firm undertook the construction of silos in the Latakia Port. See *Ibid.*: 1-2.

¹⁰⁷ The contract for the refinery which was to be built in Homs was signed on 16 March 1956. *Ibid.*: 2.

¹⁰⁸ According to the Syrian Minister of Public Works, who made a statement on the subject to the Chamber of Deputies on 19 March 1957, a considerable number of offers were submitted but only four of

Following the awarding of the refinery contract to the Czechoslovakian company, heated debates, often divided along conservative and leftist lines, took place in the Syrian parliament. While those who opposed the awarding of the biggest contract in Syrian history at that time to the Czech company implied that political and especially anti-West considerations rather than economic and technical merits of the offers played a decisive part in choosing the winner, government representatives rallied to defend the decision and pointed out to the fact that it was the cheapest offer.¹⁰⁹ The extent to which the contract was taken seriously not only in Syria but even abroad was further demonstrated by the revelation that the United States strongly considered breaking precedent in order to subsidise Procon, a Western petroleum consortium, to enable it to lower its bid below the Czech offer.¹¹⁰

Moreover, Premier Minister 'Asali admitted that he had to defend the decision personally after protestations from abroad.¹¹¹

Several firms, including British, American, Italian and Czechoslovak have made offers for the bid which was invited on an international level. After studying the offers, it was found that the conditions of the Czechoslovak offer were the easiest and most flexible and compatible with the country's interest in the light of purely economic and technical interests ... When an important foreign personality called on me later to protest at the rejection of the offer of an American firm, I explained the matter to him and pointed out the soundness of our attitude.

Following the appointment of Soviet experts to act as supervisors on the account of the Syrian government and the removal of doubts on the adequateness of the original site near Homs, work on the project started promptly and continued smoothly. The refinery

them qualified for active consideration. The qualifiers were a British-American, an Italian, a West German and the winner, Czech Techno-Export company. The original price in the offer of the British-American firm (Procon) was SL59.5 million, later reduced to SL56 million, with an interest rate of 4.5% which was reduced to 3.25% at the last minute. The Italian firm originally quoted a price of SL59,616,000, which was reduced to SL57,600,000 with an interest rate of 6% subsequently cut down to 4.5%. German firm's original price of SL63,748,000 was subsequently reduced to SL56 million, with an interest rate of 7.5%. *MEED*, 19 April 1957: 10-11; EIU/QERS, 9 May 1957: 1-2.

¹⁰⁹ Torrey, 1964: 312-313.

¹¹⁰ Lesch, 1990: 216, note 26.

¹¹¹ BBC/SWB, No. 268, 11 June 1957. As 'Asali subsequently revealed in an interview, the important foreign personality was none other than the American ambassador in Damascus. See BBC/SWB, No. 340, 4 September 1957.

was completed 15 days ahead of schedule and started trial production in June 1959.¹¹² Although the official opening of the refinery took place in August 1959,¹¹³ the Syrian Government retained the services of 36 Czechoslovak experts in order to train local technicians during the first six months of operation.¹¹⁴

One of the earliest but intense rounds of competition between companies of the West and the East for the implementation of a major Syrian development project had therefore been won by the East. The significance of this contract was not to be merely judged by the benefits that would accrue to Syria or the profit to be made by the winner, it was more than that; it became a measure of Syria's direction both in internal and external affairs and showed how much they were entangled. While the granting of the contract to a company from the Eastern Bloc precipitated a showdown between the left and the right within Syria and set a precedent in the US for the use of public funds to subsidise private firms to underbid socialist competition, the outcome demonstrated that the left was undoubtedly in ascendancy within and that the Western hegemony in Middle Eastern affairs was under attack. A simple contract for the construction of a refinery was elevated to the ranks of 'high politics'. But there was more to come.

5.4.8. Dreams Accomplished or the Poisoned Chalice: The Syrian-Soviet Economic and Technical Co-operation Agreement

As mentioned earlier, a Syrian-Soviet trade and payments agreement was concluded in November 1955. Consultations on the prospects for Soviet participation in Syrian development projects started in earnest when a team of Soviet engineers, visiting a number of Arab countries, arrived in Syria in March 1956.¹¹⁵ Further talks on the same subject took place during the visit of Dmitri Shepilov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, to Syria in June 1956 just a week after 'Asali had become Prime Minister again. According to 'Asali, the visiting Foreign Minister proposed full aid for Syria's industrialisation and other development projects by offering long-term, low interest development loans. However, obviously aware of the political implications of the matter, the Syrian Prime Minister displayed a certain reluctance to discuss the issue in

¹¹² *MEED*, 19 June 1959: 279.

¹¹³ *MEED*, 14 August 1959: 352.

¹¹⁴ *MEED*, 2 October 1959: 438.

¹¹⁵ The Soviet delegation of engineers arrived in Syria on 1 March 1956 and left on 15 March. *ESE*, 1956, 'Chronology': 2-3; *MEE*, May 1956: 74.

detail. As he put it: 'I thanked him and kindly dismissed discussion of the subject, despite the fact that his offer was free of conditions.'¹¹⁶ Thus, coming also at a time when the negotiations with the World Bank for a substantial loan were still in progress, the Soviet offer was not taken up immediately. Yet, Shepilov's visit was not entirely fruitless: a bilateral cultural agreement suggested by the Soviet Foreign Minister was concluded in August and paved the way for wide ranging cultural exchanges while an assortment of Soviet arms and war equipment was reported to have arrived at Latakia during his visit.¹¹⁷

While Shepilov's offer of economic assistance was received with a degree of reticence in the summer of 1956, this official Syrian attitude would change dramatically in less than a year. Accounting for the change was the sharp deterioration of Syria's public finances in the wake of the Suez crisis. Most significantly, the Syrian treasury was left with a heavier defence burden on the expenditure side and it was deprived of oil transit fees on the revenue side. In an attempt to ameliorate the situation, the Syrian government introduced fiscal measures with the double purpose of reducing imports and increasing its revenues. Hence, custom duties on luxury items were increased by 50 percent while those on imported foodstuff were raised by 20 percent. Nevertheless, a draft bill imposing a tax on Syrians leaving the country was met with resistance.¹¹⁸ Similarly the idea to raise monies through internal borrowing was abandoned in the face of fierce criticisms from the opposition and the media. As Hani al-Siba'i, the Minister of Education, explained: 'We abandoned the launching of a domestic loan in view of the harmful propaganda which aroused the citizens' doubts over the economic situation.'¹¹⁹ Unable to bridge the gap between the projected expenditures and revenues in the ordinary budget for 1957, the Government finally reduced allocations for defence by SL20 million to SL140 million.¹²⁰ Still, the question of how to raise the funds required to implement the development projects contemplated under the Seven-Year Plan remained pending.

¹¹⁶ BBC/SWB, No. 268, 11 June 1957.

¹¹⁷ Seale, 1986: 259; Lenczowski, 1971: 106.

¹¹⁸ *MEE*, February 1957: 27; EIU/QERS, 9 May 1957: 3.

¹¹⁹ BBC/SWB, No. 319, 10 August 1957.

¹²⁰ EIU/QERS, 8 August 1957: 3.

Consequently, members of the Syrian cabinet embarked on visits abroad in order to secure financial and technical assistance to implement development projects and military assistance to bolster its defences. Nevertheless, visits in the spring of 1957 by Foreign Minister Bitar and Minister of State and Acting Minister of Defence 'Azm to Western capitals such as Paris, Bonn, London and Washington,¹²¹ and Minister of Public Works and Communications Kayyali to Italy, Switzerland, Belgium and West Germany did not produce the desired outcome. As Kayyali explained:¹²²

I prepared a special file in which I gathered all the important projects needed by the country. I then went to Europe in search of a source which would help the country realise its projects ... The first country I visited was Italy, then Switzerland, and then Belgium. I also had discussions with businessmen in Western Germany. From all these contacts I reached the conclusion that it was impossible for us to realise our projects with the help of the Western powers, as they demanded from us extravagant interest rates which exceeded seven percent, and as they could not provide us with money on long terms.

Having already spent even the reserve funds to pay for arms bought from Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Soviet Union,¹²³ and with spending on development projects almost coming to a halt due to lack of funds,¹²⁴ the Soviet Union was approached.¹²⁵ Subsequently, 'Azm led a Syrian delegation including Kayyali, and Chief of Staff Tawfik Nizam al-Din, to the Soviet Union. During its two-week stay from 24 June to 6 August 1957, the Syrian delegation conducted negotiations with a counterpart Soviet delegation after being received at the highest level by Nikita Khrushchev, the leader of the Soviet Union, Prime Minister Nikolay Bulganin, and Soviet Defence Minister Marshal Georgii Zhukov. The outcome of the negotiations was announced in a joint Syrian-Soviet statement in Moscow¹²⁶ and later outlined by 'Azm¹²⁷ and Kayyali¹²⁸ upon their return to Damascus. Accordingly, the Soviet Union undertook to provide

¹²¹ 'Azm, 1973, 3: 11-12; Roberts, 1987: 42.

¹²² BBC/SWB, No. 332, 26 August 1957.

¹²³ 'Azm, 1973, 3: 18.

¹²⁴ Ibid.: 17.

¹²⁵ Ibid.: 9.

¹²⁶ For the Syrian-Soviet Joint Statement which included the composition of both delegations, see BBC/SWB, No. 317, 8 August 1957.

¹²⁷ BBC/SWB, No. 325, 17 August 1957. For a detailed account, see 'Azm, 1973, 3: 5-31.

¹²⁸ BBC/SWB, No. 332, 26 August 1957 and No. 343, 7 September 1957.

extensive economic assistance to Syria in the form of a long-term loan as well as technical assistance for the implementation of irrigation, energy, transportation and some other development projects. As the negotiations leading to the joint statement dealt with principles of the co-operation, the parties decided to have detailed negotiations in which their experts were to take part. The exact amount of the loan and its terms as well as the type and the duration of technical assistance were to be agreed upon after meetings of these experts whose recommendations would form the basis of a final agreement. Moreover, it was announced that there would be no political conditions or strings attached. As the joint statement put it:¹²⁹

The Soviet side has declared that this economic and technical co-operation will take place without any political or similar conditions. It will be on the basis of equality, mutual advantage, non-intervention in internal affairs and complete respect for the national security and sovereignty of the Syrian Republic.

During the same visit, the Soviet Union agreed in principle to purchase any amount of the Syrian agricultural produce offered and undertook to pay half in foreign currency and the other half in consumer goods Syria needed from the Soviet Union.¹³⁰ Therefore, the parties decided on having detailed negotiations in which their experts were to take part to finalise a separate trade agreement.¹³¹

On 27 August 1957, a Syrian delegation consisting of three members of the Economic Development Council chaired by its director, Hasan Jabbara, left Syria for Moscow to brief the Soviet authorities on Syria's development projects.¹³² Preparations reached a further stage with the arrival in Syria of Piotr Nikitin, the Soviet Deputy Chairman of the State Committee for External Economic Relations, and a team of 12 experts in Damascus on September 18 in order to undertake on the spot study of Syria's requirements. The next day, the visitors had their first meeting with a Syrian delegation which included 'Azm, Kayyali, Bitar, Khalil al-Kallas (Minister of Economy), the Director and members of the Economic Development Council and Amin al-Nafuri, the Deputy Chief of Staff the Syrian army. Following the meeting, it was announced that

¹²⁹ BBC/SWB, No. 317, 8 August 1957.

¹³⁰ BBC/SWB, No. 319, 10 August 1957 and No. 367, 5 October 1957.

¹³¹ BBC/SWB, No. 317, 8 August 1957.

¹³² BBC/SWB, No. 334, 28 August 1957; *MEED*, 30 August 1957: 10.

joint sub-committees had been formed of experts of both sides and development projects mentioned during Moscow negotiations would be examined one by one.¹³³

The work of the committees of experts and the accompanying negotiations were completed in the last week of October and the first Syrian-Soviet economic and technical co-operation agreement was signed in Damascus on 28 October 1957.¹³⁴ The basic objective of the agreement was carrying out the long-standing projects which had come into view on Syria's economic development programmes for some years. Prime Minister 'Asali summarised Syrian expectations in his opening speech of the signing ceremony.¹³⁵

We hope that through implementation of this agreement in a spirit of reciprocal confidence and mutual interest, we shall be able to attain some of the basic aims sought by every free state which is intent upon progress, growth, development and improvement, and which works for the welfare of its people and the raising of its economy... I trust that implementation of this agreement will lead to an increase in the national income in such a way that the standard of living of all people will be raised, ensuring us full benefit of the forces of nature and the potential wealth buried in the earth of this beloved homeland. In addition, the agreement will contribute to the strengthening of sincere friendly relations between the Governments of the two countries as well as between their peoples.

A list of the projects that were to be carried out with Soviet economic and technical help was annexed to the agreement and included a total of 19 studies and projects.¹³⁶ 11 out of the 19 items in the list were energy and irrigation projects. They consisted of the Euphrates project which included studies and equipment for a dam and an hydroelectric power station on the Euphrates River as well as a transmission line to carry electric power to Aleppo; smaller dams and hydroelectric power stations on the Yarmouk and Orontes rivers and in the Homs region; two thermal stations in Damascus and Aleppo; irrigation canals and equipment in order to irrigate an area of about 190,000 hectares by

¹³³ BBC/SWB, No. 355, 21 September 1957: 6; MEED, 20 September 1957: 9.

¹³⁴ The text of the agreement is reproduced in BBC/SWB, No. 388, 30 October 1957.

¹³⁵ For 'Asali's and Head of the Soviet Delegation Nikitin's speeches, see BBC/SWB, No. 388, 30 October 1957.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*; *ESE*, Annex 115: 1957.

using the waters of the Euphrates, Nahr al-Kabir, Barada and Orontes; and irrigation surveys, water exploration and installations in various parts of Syria. The main transport project was the construction of a 500-kilometre railway line from Kamishli in the north-east Syria to Aleppo and the extension of the Homs-Akkari line to the Syrian coast up to Lattakia of an approximate length of 150 km. Moreover, oil exploration over an area of 50,000 square kilometres and prospecting for mineral resources as well as drawing up of a geological map were to be carried out under the agreement. Finally, construction of a fertiliser factory and the setting up of a laboratory for agricultural research were to be undertaken. However, the list did not include development work at the port of Latakia and Tartous, as forecast at earlier reports, but equipment and material were to be supplied for Latakia storage tanks.¹³⁷

The agreement itself consisted of eleven articles. Accordingly, the Soviet side was to carry out studies, produce blueprints, undertake explorations and train Syrian technicians. Moreover, it was to supply Syria with the materials, the equipment and the machinery needed in order to implement the projects in the annexed list. The organisation of all the work, the provision of the necessary local labour, material and equipment, however, was to be carried out by the Syrian government. Regarding the financing of the projects, the agreement stipulated that the Soviet government was to grant the Syrian government a long-term credit¹³⁸ to cover the cost of all preparatory work to be carried out by Soviet organisations; the material and equipment needed for the projects included in the list, travel expenses of Soviet experts and the cost of the training of Syrian experts in the Soviet Union. Separate contracts were to be concluded for each project and were to specify the quantities, times of delivery, prices and other detailed conditions. A 2.5 percent interest rate was to be applied to the credits allocated by the Soviet Government under the agreement and repayment was to take place through instalments over 12 years.

After being concluded on 28 October 1957, the agreement with the Soviet Union was ratified unanimously by the Syrian Chamber of Deputies and by the Praesidium of the

¹³⁷ *MEED*, 1 November 1957: 9.

¹³⁸ The agreement did not specify the exact amount of the credit but George Lenczowski gives a figure of \$579 million for the total cost of the projects and \$140 million for the Soviet loan. Lenczowski, 1971: 105.

Supreme Soviet in early November.¹³⁹ In December, 'Azm, the chief architect of the agreement, led a delegation to Moscow to exchange instruments of ratification.¹⁴⁰ During the visit, the parties conducted negotiations on the expansion of Soviet-Syrian trade and an agreement was signed on 19 December 1957 according to which the Soviet Union agreed to purchase cotton and grain from Syria and for Syria to buy Soviet commodities, mainly machinery and equipment.¹⁴¹ After returning to Damascus, Kayyali, the minister of public works and communications and member of the Syrian delegation, announced that Syria had secured the same terms as Egypt for the repayment of each part of the credit to be granted by the USSR. Repayment would begin on completion of each project financed by the Soviet loan, instead of a year after reception of each part of the loan.¹⁴²

5.4.9. Reactions to the Agreement

'Azm's visit to the Soviet Union and the announcement of the Syrian-Soviet statement on economic and technical co-operation raised cries of alarm especially in Washington and in the neighbouring pro-Western states, notably in Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Israel. An example of their hostile reception was presented even before the announcement of the joint Syrian-Soviet statement. On 1 August 1957, in its commentary on the initial reports of a Soviet approval of a loan to the Syrian government, the Jordanian radio hastened to accuse Syria of 'becoming a satellite of the iron curtain powers'. According to the broadcast from Amman, while Syria's fate was being 'dominated by communism through such lost sons of Syria as Bakdash, Khalid al-'Azm, Al-Kayyali, and other colleagues', it was becoming a springboard for the spread of communism and 'a pivot for Soviet imperialism in the heart of the Arab countries'.¹⁴³ In the United States, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles called President Eisenhower's attention to this newest case of 'Soviet "aid" to neutralist countries' on 6 August,¹⁴⁴ the day the joint statement was promulgated.

¹³⁹ BBC/SWB, No. 396, 8 November 1957; *EIU/QERS*, 31 January 1958: 1.

¹⁴⁰ Already acting Minister of Defence, 'Azm had been appointed Deputy Prime Minister before his departure. For the composition of the Syrian delegation and the text of the joint communiqué on Syrian-Soviet talks in Moscow, see BBC/SWB, No. 434, 23 December 1957.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² BBC/SWB, No. 436, 30 December 1957.

¹⁴³ BBC/SWB, No. 314, 3 August 1957: 14.

¹⁴⁴ Little, 1990: 70.

Within the next few days, Washington gave final authorisation for Operation Wappen, the code name for an American plot to depose the left-leaning government in Syria.¹⁴⁵ According to the Syrian accounts, officials from the US embassy in Damascus had approached the members of the Syrian armed forces to get them overthrow the government and replace it with a US friendly regime. However, the conspiracy was uncovered in its early stages since several officers approached by the instigators reported back to the Syrian authorities.¹⁴⁶ After the official announcement on 12 August, three implicated American diplomats were declared *persona non grata*. Denying the Syrian charges as fabrications, the Eisenhower administration reciprocated by declaring the Syrian ambassador to the United States and his Second Secretary *persona non grata*.¹⁴⁷

Soon afterwards, Chief of Staff Tafwiq Nizam al-Din, who had been involved in an abortive attempt to purge leftist officers from several top positions in the Syrian army the previous spring, was replaced by Afif al-Bizri.¹⁴⁸ In addition to the replacement of the chief of staff, ten high-ranking officers were discharged and some others were transferred to passive positions.¹⁴⁹ This major reshuffle was widely interpreted as a communist capture of the Syrian high command since Bizri was portrayed, especially in the Western media, to be a Communist and openly a pro-Soviet officer.¹⁵⁰ Thus, the bungled American plot, rather than changing the course of events in Syria to Washington's liking, actually played into the hands of the leftists who used the occasion to purge their opponents in the Army.

After these setbacks, the Eisenhower administration moved to prepare the ground for more drastic measures not to 'lose the whole Middle East to Communism'.¹⁵¹ A propaganda campaign was launched to point up the gravity of the communist effort in Syria. As the relevant report to the American president maintained, Middle East posts had been instructed 'to use every source to pursue this campaign, to give it top priority,

¹⁴⁵ Charles Yost, who served as US Ambassador to Syria briefly in late 1957, confirmed that Wappen was 'a clumsy CIA plot'. Ibid.: 71.

¹⁴⁶ For the text of the official statement giving the details of the plot, see BBC/SWB, No. 322, 14 August 1957.

¹⁴⁷ *New York Times*, 14 August 1957 and 15 August 1957.

¹⁴⁸ Not unexpectedly, the official explanation was that Nizam al-Din had asked for retirement for personal reasons. See BBC/SWB, No. 330, 23 August 1957.

¹⁴⁹ BBC/SWB, No. 326, 19 August 1957.

¹⁵⁰ See e.g. *New York Times*, 17 August 1957.

¹⁵¹ Little, 1990: 72.

and to devote to it maximum available initiative, imagination and talent.¹⁵² Thus, the Syrian-Soviet co-operation agreement, which would have helped Syrians carry out a majority of pending public development projects if it had been allowed to be implemented, was reported as ‘a \$100 million military-aid deal’¹⁵³ or as ‘a \$240 million deal for Soviet bloc tanks, guns and jet fighters’¹⁵⁴ or, as Douglas Little disclosed, was taken as ‘a \$500 million grain-for-weapons deal’.¹⁵⁵ Taking the lead in the campaign, Dulles claimed, on 27 August, that the acquisition of Soviet arms had given Syria ‘important offensive capabilities’ in terms of the Middle East. He added that the placing of ‘a very large quantity of military equipment’ in the hands of Syrian leaders ‘who seem to be influenced, at least, by international communism’ had ‘very genuinely alarmed’ Syria’s Arab neighbours.¹⁵⁶ It needs to be added that Although an arms deal might have accompanied the agreement, it is highly unlikely that its magnitude ever reached such a threatening level. As Kenneth Love observed:¹⁵⁷

The US Embassy in Syria connived at false reports issued in Washington and London through diplomatic and press channels to the effect that Russian arms were pouring into the Syrian port of Latakia, that not “more than 123 MiGs” had arrived in Syria ... I travelled all over Syria without hindrance in November and December and found there were indeed “not more than 123 MiGs.” There were none. And no Russian arms had arrived for months.

Yet, the American Sixth Fleet was ordered to the eastern Mediterranean off Syria’s shores and the NATO base at Incirlik, Turkey, was reinforced with US jets from Western Europe.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, a top State Department official, Loy Henderson, was dispatched to the region to promote a regional response to the growing Syrian ‘danger’ and to assure Syria’s pro-Western Arab neighbours and Turkey that the US would come to their assistance, militarily and economically, in case they decided to act.¹⁵⁹ In other words, the Eisenhower Doctrine, which authorised military intervention on behalf of

¹⁵² Lesch, 1990: 355-356.

¹⁵³ *Time*, 2 September 1957.

¹⁵⁴ *Time*, 14 October 1957.

¹⁵⁵ Little, 1990: 70.

¹⁵⁶ *Facts on File*, 22-28 August 1957: 276.

¹⁵⁷ Love, 1969: 653, as quoted in Petran, 1972: 118.

¹⁵⁸ Armaoğlu, 1989: 508.

¹⁵⁹ For an extensive coverage of Henderson mission, see Lesch, 1990: 302-346. For Syrian Foreign Minister Bitar’s evaluation of Henderson mission, see BBC/SWB, No. 340, 4 September 1957.

any Middle Eastern country threatened by international communism, would be invoked.¹⁶⁰

However, although meeting with Henderson in Ankara and Beirut, Iraqi, Jordanian and Lebanese leaders eventually felt compelled to publicly distance themselves from a US supported action which was most likely to be perceived as an imperialist intervention on the lines of tripartite aggression against Egypt. While they retreated one after another, Turkey, partly out of the fear of being outflanked by the Soviets on its northern border and a 'Soviet sponsored regime' on its southern border and partly to get a greater amount of American military and economic assistance, mobilised its forces along the Syrian border.¹⁶¹

As these developments were taking place the Soviet Union leaped to Syria's defence. On 3 September, in a note delivered to the governments of the US, Britain and France, the Soviets accused their Western counterparts of subversion in Syria and proposed that the four powers renounce interference in the internal affairs of countries in the Middle East, and undertake, collectively, to stop all arms shipments to that region.¹⁶² Moreover, on 10 September, Soviet Prime Minister Bulganin addressed another note to his Turkish counterpart, Adnan Menderes. In the note, Bulganin accused Turkey of poisoning troops on Syria's border and warned that action against Syria would not remain localised but be transformed into a large-scale conflagration of war with dire consequences for the aggressors.¹⁶³ Subsequently, Moscow backed its veiled threat by massing troops on the Soviet-Turkish border. Moreover, Moscow sent a naval squadron on a ten-day visit to Latakia Port as a sign of its commitment to Syria's defence.¹⁶⁴ The Soviet stance during these events gives the impression that they tried to prevent the possibility of an invasion of Syria by a combination of Arab states and Turkey with the support of the United States. Knowing that its actions were closely observed by the rest of the Third World,

¹⁶⁰ The Eisenhower Doctrine was issued on 9 March 1957 'on assumption that the reverse suffered by Britain and France had left a political vacuum in the area'. See Yapp, 1996: 414-415.

¹⁶¹ In an exemplary statement, Turkish government's concerns about developments in Syria were expressed by the Turkish Prime Minister, Adnan Menderes, who said that Syria was on the way of becoming an arms depot for others to use for subversive and aggressive purposes. BBC/SWB, No. 359, 26 September 1957.

¹⁶² The note is reproduced in Ro'i, 1974: 234-236.

¹⁶³ The note and excerpts from Turkey's reply is reproduced in Ro'i, 1974: 238-242.

¹⁶⁴ While in Latakia, the Soviet warships were visited by a Syrian delegation which included 'Azm, several other ministers and the Chief of Staff of the Syrian Army. Subsequently, the commander of the warships was received by President Quwwatli and Acting Minister of Defence 'Azm. BBC/SWB, No. 354, 20 September 1957; No. 359, 26 September 1957; and No. 363, 1 October 1957.

the Soviets were prepared to take a very strong stand to protect their rising prestige in the Middle East and the Third World.

As the Syrian government had offered its 'strong and absolute support' to Egypt during the Suez crises, President Nasser did not fail to extend his country's support to Syria which came under mounting pressure during the second half of 1957. On 9 September, Nasser declared that Egypt would 'continue to give unlimited and unconditional support to Syria'.¹⁶⁵ Two days later, a delegation of Syrian officers led by Bizri and Sarraj was received in Cairo to discuss what might be done to bolster Syria's security. As Radio Damascus acclaimed, 'the support which Egypt vouched by word of mouth' was finally affirmed 'by deeds and facts' with the arrival of Egyptian troops at Latakia on 13 October.¹⁶⁶ While this step signified the activation of the 1955 defence agreement which had been remaining dormant, President Nasser insured himself against unwanted surprises by placing both the Syrian and Egyptian armies under the Joint Command and by appointing 'Abd al-Hakim 'Amir as its commander-in-chief.¹⁶⁷

The crisis which began following 'Azm's visit to the Soviet Union petered out by the end of October 1957. By that time, the Eisenhower administration had moderated its stance towards the Syrian regime after its initial failure to enlist Arab support for any possible action; King Saud had launched a mediation attempt and had helped reduce the tension but had been prevented from consolidating his diplomatic gains by Nasser whose dispatching of troops to Syria made Saud's efforts seem timid by comparison; the Syrian and the Soviet governments had appealed for a hearing in the UN General Assembly on the threat poised by Turkish troop movements to Syria's security and to international peace but two rival draft resolutions were never put to vote as the post-scare relaxation set in before November; and Turkey had been promised increased economic aid and military support by the US before the withdrawal of its troops massed on the Syrian frontier.¹⁶⁸ Yet just as the three-month crisis that was precipitated by

¹⁶⁵ Ro'i, 1974: 238.

¹⁶⁶ BBC/SWB, No. 375, 15 October 1957: 6.

¹⁶⁷ In a move probably calculated to dispel doubts about his pan-Arab credentials and gain the trust of the Egyptian President, Bizri delivered a highly enthusiastic welcoming speech to the Egyptian troops upon their arrival and declared his allegiance to the Egyptian President: 'God willing, we shall triumph, so long as the leader of our Arab renaissance is President Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser.' BBC/SWB, No. 375, 15 October 1957, p. 6.

¹⁶⁸ Perlmann, 1957: 402-408; Torrey, 1964: Chapter 11; Seale 1986: Chapter 21; Ro'i, 1974: 237-246; Mu'allim, 1985: 218-223; Armaoğlu, 1989: 508-509; Little, 1990: 73.

Washington's and its regional allies' apprehension over the prospects of the expansion of the Syrian-Soviet co-operation drew to a close in late October, the Soviet Union and Egypt were confirmed as Syria's twin protectors.

5.4.10. Rush to the Union

However, it was the outcome of internal political struggle which made Syria choose, at the expense of its independence and sovereignty, Egypt rather than the Soviet Union as its ultimate protector. The ruling leftist coalition which had formed the National Front towards the end of 1956 maintained its coherence during the highly charged three-month period that followed the announcement of the American plot. But once the crisis died down two rival poles started to emerge.

The first of the two poles included 'Azm and his supporters in the parliament and the Syrian Communists whose leader had had a two-month spell in the Soviet Union while the Syrian-Soviet discussions leading to the announcement of a joint statement were held in Moscow. Their position was greatly enhanced by the Soviet offer of economic and technical assistance and the robust support Moscow extended while Syria had faced the threat of foreign invasion. The leadership of the Ba'th stood at the other pole out of the fear that the growing appeal of 'Azm and the Communists would undermine the position of their own party. On the other hand, the Ba'th was also apprehensive that the rift between them and the Communists would allow the conservative parties to gain ground and change the political landscape beyond their control. Moreover, they did not discount the possibility of a Communist-supported coup d'état, which even if abortive, could bring a right-wing backlash and outside intervention.¹⁶⁹

Thus under pressure from both left and right, and as a result of its weaknesses as well as its unionist doctrines, the Ba'th regarded union with Egypt as the only way out of trouble and intensified its campaign to realise its long-term ambition. Given the relentless suppression of the Communists by Nasser's regime in Egypt, the leadership of Ba'th expected that Nasser would give their local rivals the same treatment but trust them with running Syria's affairs.

¹⁶⁹ Seale, 1986: 316-317.

Significantly, the views of the Ba'th and President Nasser concerning the union of the Syria and Egypt began to converge in the latter part of 1957. That became apparent following the arrival in Damascus of forty members of the Egyptian parliament to attend, with their Syrian counterparts, a joint session in the Syrian Chamber. There, the Egyptian delegation which was led by Anwar as-Sadat voted unanimously with the Syrian deputies on a resolution calling on their governments to enter into immediate discussions for the establishment of a federal union between the two countries.¹⁷⁰ In characterising the projected union as 'federal' the resolution followed the Syrian conception. However, the basic aim of the union with Egypt, either federal or total, would almost definitely neutralise or even eradicate the rising influence of the undesired, from the Egyptian regime's and its Syrian allies' point of view, elements of the left which were willing to accept a higher level of co-operation and assistance from the Soviet Union and other socialist countries than what was acceptable for Egypt.

While the Ba'th was the driving force in the government and initiator of the resolutions in the Syrian parliament that laid the ground for union with Egypt, it was the military officers, encouraged by the Ba'th, who became instrumental in bringing it about. On 12 January 1958, Chief of Staff Afif al-Bizri, without prior knowledge of the government, led a delegation consisting of almost the entire Syrian Army Command to Cairo to meet Nasser and ask for immediate and comprehensive union. The bewildered Syrian government decided to send Foreign Minister Bitar to Cairo to assess the situation. Although he had no authority, once in Cairo, Bitar promptly joined the officers in union negotiations. President Nasser, who was well aware that the officers and Bitar were in no position to bargain at that stage, made clear that he did not intend to negotiate and that he would not accept anything less than unconditional 'total union' including the dissolution of all political parties, and Syrian army's renunciation of all political activity. Expectedly, when Bitar returned to Damascus to convey Nasser's terms to his colleagues in the government, he found a hardly receptive audience. This turn of events was loathsome especially for 'Azm and his Communist allies who fronted the opposition to both the concept of a total union and the dissolution of political parties. While time was heavily running against him, 'Azm, after enlisting the support of both

¹⁷⁰ For the text of the resolution drawn up by the Egyptian National Assembly's Committee of Arab Affairs and the Syrian Chamber of Deputies' Foreign Affairs Committee, at a joint meeting on 17 November 1957 and passed by the joint session of Syrian and Egyptian Deputies on the next day, see BBC/SWB, No.406, 20 November 1957.

President Quwwatli and Prime Minister 'Asali, took the lead to get the cabinet draft a framework for a federal union in which each country would be given a greater degree of autonomy. Nevertheless, the federal union project was rejected by Nasser and his terms were accepted under strong pressure from Syrian army chiefs. On 1 February 1958, the creation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) was proclaimed, on 5 February the two parliaments ratified the decision and on 21 February both countries endorsed the union in a referendum and elected Nasser president.¹⁷¹

After the union proclamation, the Syrian Communist Party, rather than dissolving itself as the other parties did in accordance of the terms of the union, decided to destroy all party documents, including membership lists and materials on front organisations and returned to clandestinity while its leader, Khalid Baqdash, left for exile in the Soviet Bloc.¹⁷² Not unexpectedly Khalid al-'Azm, the architect of the Soviet co-operation agreement, was sidelined when portfolios of the Union were allocated by Nasser. Conversely, the leaders of the Ba'th and the senior military officers who had fronted the drive for the merger received high positions in the unified state.¹⁷³

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that while the rapid economic growth achieved in the early 1950 started slowing down, the effects of the obstacles that impeded sustainable economic development such as the lack of adequate transport, energy, irrigation, education and financial facilities or the deficiencies and inequalities that marked the agrarian property and production relations became even more pronounced. However, while the blocking of deep-touching social reform legislation in the Syrian Chamber by the conservative majority led to further polarisation, a development programme providing for new financial institutions, and vital irrigation, transport and energy projects was adopted. Moreover, it was decided to improve education and public health facilities through funding from the ordinary budget of the central government. Yet, as the analysis of the ordinary revenues and expenditures of the central government has illustrated the ruling elites did not have enough financial resources at their disposal either to substantially increase the allocations for education and health facilities or to pursue ambitious development programmes. Thus, they undertook initiatives that would

¹⁷¹ Petran, 1972: 125; Seale: 319-323; Roberts, 1987: 43.

¹⁷² Ramet, 1990: 70.

¹⁷³ Madani, 1996: 124.

help increase the country's foreign exchange earning capacity and mobilise external resources to foster economic development.

In this respect, this chapter has demonstrated that in its bid to get higher transit fees from the pipeline systems that traversed its territory, the Syrian government used various means including the mobilisation of the public to exert pressure on the IPC and succeeded in getting a settlement that would boost Syria's foreign exchange earnings. Yet, the preceding analysis has also shown that the Suez Crisis played, in a further illustration of the interconnectedness of 'considerations of plenty' and 'considerations of power', a significant role in the deterioration of Syrian public finances as it prompted an increase in defence expenditures and deprived Syria of substantial oil transit revenues that were expected to accrue to the Syrian treasury after the renewal of the pipeline agreement with the IPC. Similarly, this chapter has discussed the emergence of two rival blocks in the wake of the campaign to draw the states of the region into the Baghdad Pact which was propagated as an anti-Soviet defence organisation. Underscoring the Syrian government's attempts to derive economic benefits and get its allies shoulder part of its defence burden, it has been shown that even this hard case issue of 'high politics' had a complimentary economic dimension whose consideration enriches our understanding of the motives of the actors that were drawn in the struggle over the Pact.

As Constructivist accounts suggest President Nasser's ability to frame the formation of Baghdad Pact as a violation of Arab nationalism points to the significance of ideas, identities and norms.¹⁷⁴ On the other hand, the use of force by Israel that helped decide the outcome of the debate in favour of President Nasser and the subsequent alignments can be explained by Realism's balance of power or balance of threat theories. Indeed, the interest shown by the superpowers and the formation of two rival regional blocs do add weight Realist accounts. However, Syrian leaders' enduring efforts to get Saudi Arabia and Egypt foot parts of its increasing defence expenditures through the formation of a common defence budget and their insistence on the formation of an economic unity show that the search for external resources springing from Syria's impoverished material structure, in other words its resource gap, forms an integral part of the whole debate over the Baghdad Pact. The focus on this aspect of the debate does

¹⁷⁴ Barnett, 1998: 108-120.

not imply that external threats or pan-Arab norms did not play a part in shaping Syria's foreign policy. Certainly they did. Yet the incorporation of the dimensions that attract the focus of political economy perspectives is also required to get a comprehensive and full picture. These contending perspectives can complement one another.

Besides, the examination of the award of the contract for the building of Syria's oil refinery to a Czechoslovakian firm highlighted the peculiarities of the development problematic in a Third World state and illustrated the elevation to the ranks of 'high politics' of an issue which had previously been regarded to belong to the ranks of 'low politics'. It is also notable that the awarding of what could be taken a simple contract for the construction of an industrial plant became a measure of Syria's internal and external orientation.

Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the expansion of relations with the states of the Eastern Bloc mainly followed the drive for trade agreements that was spurred by the need to find new export markets for Syria's cash crop surpluses which had a paramount role in meeting the foreign exchange requirements of the economy. Likewise, the Soviet Union was approached to provide economic and technical assistance at a time when spending on development projects had almost come to a halt due to lack of funds. However, as we have seen, even before its formal conclusion the news of the agreement sufficed to set off a crisis that brought the superpowers, regional powers and the contending Syrian factions into confrontation. In the end, neither the architects of the agreement nor Syria could reap the full benefits of the agreement. Instead the intensity of the conflict between the contending elites which was exacerbated by foreign meddling and pressure led to the formation of the UAR in February 1958, a development hardly predictable six or even three months earlier.

Anyway, the formation of the UAR was applauded as an 'anti-imperialist' move by Soviet commentators who emphasised that the Syrian-Soviet and the Egyptian-Soviet economic co-operation agreements were of the greatest importance for the development of the young republic.¹⁷⁵ Yet, before the end of the year President Nasser accused the Syrian Communists of rejecting Arab nationalism and working against unity. Then,

¹⁷⁵ *Mizan*, March 1960: 7-8 and December 1960: 2-4.

arrests followed and anti-Communist measures were put in place.¹⁷⁶ The Soviets, although they would openly denounce the persecution of Communists in the UAR as ‘a reactionary affair’,¹⁷⁷ did not withdraw any of the commitments agreed upon in the Syrian-Soviet co-operation agreement. On the other hand, despite announcements that creation of the UAR would not alter the operation of the Soviet economic agreement,¹⁷⁸ as we shall see in the following chapter, alternative credit and technical assistance suppliers were sought and whenever they came forward they were preferred to Soviet assistance.

The events that unfolded following the announcement of the Syrian-Soviet statement on economic and technical co-operation, which turned out to be a poisoned chalice for its Syrian architects, is an excellent but not unexceptional case of the interconnectedness of the ‘considerations of power’ and ‘considerations of plenty’; of the overlapping of domestic politics and foreign policy; and of the collapse of the traditional distinction between ‘high’ and ‘low’ politics.

¹⁷⁶ Lenczowski, 1972: 108, Batatu, 1978: 860-861; Ramet, 1990: 26.

¹⁷⁷ *Mizan*, March 1960: 7-8 and December 1960: 2-4.

¹⁷⁸ EIU/QERS, 10 May 1958: 3.

CHAPTER SIX

SEPARATIST REGIME, 1961-1963

6.1. Introduction

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the Syrian economy which had expanded rapidly in the early 1950s had not been able to sustain the same level of economic growth in the years before the union. Both during the initial period of rapid expansion and the following years of slowing economic growth, the need for massive public investment was recognised, individual public development projects were initiated and progressive steps were taken towards the formulation of an economic development programme and eventually a seven-year plan was put in place. Faced with the lack of adequate resources to implement these economic development projects, successive regimes had tried, with varied degrees of success, to secure additional resources from abroad. The issue of economic development not only continued to claim a central stage during the union, it became a matter of priority immediately after the completion of the constitutional framework. As President Nasser himself stated a week after the coup which separated Syria from Egypt:¹

I perceived after completing the institutional framework of the Union that there was not much time for us to waste. I have devoted all my efforts to the operations of construction in Syria and my estimate was that we should proceed in that as quickly as possible so that it might become the basic foundation of progress towards prosperity. During three and a half years of the Union, genuine works were fulfilled which Syria during all her history never previously witnessed. I say this not to show off, but I say it as an actual fact supported by figures...

The figures provided by Nasser suggested that actual general expenditure of the state in Syria, from the day of the completion of the unity to the end of the fiscal year in 1961, amounted to SL2,862 million.² He also added that they had started the implementation of a development plan aimed at doubling the Syrian national income within ten years and that the first-five year period of this plan stipulated a total investment of SL2,720

¹ President Nasser's speech of 5 October 1961 is reproduced in BBC/SWB, No. 762, 7 October 1961.

² Despite plans for a common 'Arab dinar', the Syrian and Egyptian currencies remained unified until the end of the UAR.

million. In a bid to underline benefits of the union for the Syrian economy and the Egyptian contribution to it, Nasser asked the Arab League to form a committee to investigate and verify his assertions. Although such a committee was never formed and some if not all of the figures provided by Nasser were strongly disputed or qualified by leaders of the Separatist regime,³ the terms Nasser chose to defend the union and the resulting reaction on the part of the emerging regime in Syria is a testimony to the importance attached to financial matters and economic development.

On the other hand, although the initiative for the union of Syria and Egypt had come from the former, the union was eventually created on the terms and conditions of Nasser who was intent on centralising authority in his own hands. Accordingly, a provisional constitution announced on 5 March 1958 gave almost all legislative and executive powers to Nasser who was authorised to appoint or dismiss the four Vice-Presidents, a Central Cabinet, members of a Legislative Assembly and the heads of the two Executive Councils. Moreover, he was empowered to rule by presidential decree without restriction.⁴ Furthermore, in the actual running of the affairs of the state, President Nasser relied heavily on Egyptian personnel whom he positioned in key offices of the union, while some other posts remained symbolic and served as 'institutional dumping grounds where Nasser could deposit troublesome Syrians he wished to neutralise' as Malik Mufti put it.⁵ Even the Syrian politicians, civilian and military alike, who were instrumental in bringing about the union and consequently rewarded by Nasser by being appointed to these 'institutional dumping grounds' were gradually dismissed or forced to resign before the summer of 1960 with the exception of Sarraj who managed to keep his influential position until he was summoned to Cairo towards the end of the union.

Even though the existence of two separate executive councils for Syria and Egypt, which were henceforth to be regarded as two provinces or regions of the UAR, provided a façade of internal autonomy,⁶ other measures such as the establishment of central

³ For the counter statement by the first Prime Minister of the Separatist Regime, Ma'mun al-Kuzbari, see BBC/SWB, No. 762, 7 October 1961. For a detailed response by Awad Barakat, the Minister of Economy and Industry in Kuzbari's cabinet, see BBC/SWB, No. 763, 9 October 1961.

⁴ The full text of the fourteen-article provisional constitution is reproduced in Hamdan, 1996: 236-237.

⁵ Mufti, 1996: 122.

⁶ Even these executive councils fell victim to Nasser's centralising drive and were finally abolished on 17 August 1961 leaving only a single central cabinet based in Cairo. Although six Syrians were still

ministries in every department in Cairo, the dissolution of Syrian municipal councils and the establishment of State Council of the UAR which made the High Court in Syria redundant left no doubt that the seat of the central government, that is Cairo, became the real centre of all policymaking for the entire union and President Nasser the ultimate policymaker. Since the form of the union and the actual running of union affairs did not provide any room for a separate Syrian regime and since a main aim of this study is to demonstrate the way or the ways different Syrian regimes attempted to generate the financial resources necessary for sustainable economic development that would ensure their survival, the union years will not be dealt with in a separate chapter.

Yet, the economic legacy of the union had such a bearing on the following Separatist Regime in Syria that a comprehensive analysis would almost be impossible without a review of what happened during the three and half years of the union. Thus some of the pivotal topics such as the economic performance of Syria under the union (or the northern region as it was then called) as well as the economic development plans and the question of the funds for their implementation will be reviewed immediately in the present section as a prelude to the discussion of the subsequent the Separatist regime

The first section of this chapter deals entirely with the UAR period and opens with an overview of some basic indicators of the performance of the Syrian economy during the union years which coincided with one of the longest spell of drought in the history of modern Syria. The impact of this drought especially on Syria's foreign exchange earning capacity is gauged and measures which aimed at either preserving foreign exchange or increasing the foreign exchange available to the Syrian economy are considered. In this vein, as it has been the case in the previous chapters, the evolution of development plans is traced and their sources of financing are analysed. Moreover, the implementation of projects covered in these plans is followed up in order to ascertain how much is accomplished. Then we turn our attention to efforts to procure foreign credits in order to meet Syria's needs during the union years. The undertaken analysis will reveal that in an attempt to avoid dependence on the Soviet Union, the union authorities would strive to diversify sources of assistance. Therefore while the pre-union Syrian reluctance to obtain Western aid due to the strings attached would be overcome,

occupying ministerial seats in the last central government of the UAR, as Hans E. Tütsch pointed out, being given technical tasks, they had little political influence in Cairo. See Tütsch, 1964: 77.

the Syrian-Soviet Agreement would see a significant reduction in its scope. The evaluation of the diversification drive and related indicators of development brings the first section of this chapter to an end.

The second section opens with a discussion of the end of the union and the formation of a Separatist Regime. The composition of the elites of the Separatists Regime and their socio-economic and foreign policy preferences as reflected in the government programmes or proposals of the period are of a particular interest in this and the following parts of the chapter since they underline the struggle over Syria's development trajectory.

The third section of the chapter first examines the question of international recognition and moves to the consideration of the related policy of *rapprochement* with neighbouring Arab countries which had both political and economic considerations as its underlying causes. The efforts to deal with the immediate financial difficulties inherited from the union period and the endeavours to procure long-term foreign credits to finance large-scale development projects are followed by an evaluation of the indicators of economic accomplishments of the Separatist Period. The chapter closes with a brief discussion of the factors that combined to bring the Separatist Regime to an end despite the achievement of the greatest level of diversification in terms of credit suppliers and trade partners during the period covered by this study.

6.2. Economic Performance of the Union: Some Indicators

In post World War II Syria's rapid economic growth was achieved mainly due to the diversification and increase of agricultural output as a result of the expansion of the area under cultivation in general and the irrigated area in particular. However, by 1958 only about eleven percent of the total cultivated area was irrigated and the economy was dominantly depended on rain-fed agriculture which was vulnerable to severe fluctuations due to the irregularity of rainfall over the years.⁷ This vulnerability of the Syrian economy was drastically exposed during Syria's union with Egypt as Syria experienced three years of successive drought and less than adequate rainfall in 1961, the final year of the union. While cotton, the main cash crop, was little affected, the output of other crops, especially of cereals, dropped sharply. As an indication, the index

⁷ Table 9.

of agricultural production (1956-100) fell from 107 in 1957 to 76 in 1958, dipped to 68 in 1960 and eventually registered a slight recovery reaching 86 in 1961.⁸ Although the majority of the other sectors of the Syrian economy and especially industry and government continued to expand, this expansion was not sufficient to offset the decline in agriculture's contribution to national product during the union years. Hence, net domestic product declined for three consecutive years from about SL2,801 million in 1957 to SL2,575 million in 1960 and was only one percent higher in the final year of the union than it was the year prior to the union.⁹ Another consequence of the contraction in agricultural output was a slump in exports and a surge in imports, pulling down the ratio of export earnings to imports from 76.6 percent in 1954-1957 to only 52.5 percent in 1958-1961.¹⁰ The cumulative trade gap during the same four-year period reached almost SL1,400 million or nearly half the net domestic product of a single year in the same period, which tremendously strained the foreign exchange position in Syria.

Meanwhile, the Syrian treasury continued to receive an annual average of over SL91 million (over \$25 million) in oil transit fees during the three financial years following the formation of the UAR, an amount almost equal to a quarter of the value of its annual exports or around one-fifth of its ordinary budget revenues. Over 95 percent of the fees were paid by the IPC for the transit of Iraqi crude while Tapline paid the rest, that is, a fixed amount of \$1.2 million (about SL4.3 million) a year for the transit of Saudi crude.¹¹

Although oil transit fees continued to flow to the Syrian treasury and remained an important source of foreign exchange for the Syrian economy, they alone could not counterbalance the huge trade deficit incurred as a result of both the decline in exports and the surge in imports nor they were ample enough to fill in the vacuum exacerbated by the exodus of Syrian capital.¹² Feeling the strain on Syria's foreign exchange position as early as the summer of 1958,¹³ the UAR authorities were prompted to take

⁸ Kanovsky, 1977, Table 6: 27.

⁹ *SSA*, 1971: 484-485.

¹⁰ While exports totalled only about SL1,500 million in 1957-1961, imports reached almost SL2,900 million during the same four-year period. See Table 4.

¹¹ See Table 7 and *MEED*, 1 December 1961: 536.

¹² According to one estimate, in 1961 alone between SL500-600 million left Syria. See Palmer, 1966: 61.

¹³ In the first half of 1958, Syrian trade deficit reached SL100 million, more than double the amount for the same period of the previous year. More irritating for the UAR authorities, the deficit during the first year of the union reached SL309 million. *EIU/QERS*, 5 November 1958: 5 and Table 3.

countermeasures aimed at either preserving foreign exchange or increasing the amount of foreign exchange available to the Syrian economy.¹⁴ These ‘austerity’ measures were accompanied with measures aimed at accelerating economic development. The foremost of these involved the reconsideration of the development plan then in force and its replacement with more ambitious ones.

6.3. Economic Development Plans

During the union years, the issue of economic development was also given priority since it would be hard not to recognise that diversification already achieved through the expansion of irrigated cotton cultivation prevented the crisis situation from reaching catastrophic proportions. As Syria was going through its longest drought in modern times, it was becoming clear that the more irrigation could be extended and the more the economy could be diversified, the less the losses would be due to wide seasonal climatic variations. Hence, in the summer of 1958, the UAR authorities discarded the rather modest seven-year SL668.9 million Syrian economic development plan that had been inaugurated in 1955 and replaced it with a much larger ten-year (July 1958-June 1968) economic development plan that sought to increase total projected investment expenditures to SL2,041 million.¹⁵ According to this plan that laid great emphasis on agriculture and hydro-electricity projects, loans worth SL535.5 million (approximately \$150 million) from abroad were to be contracted to help meet its foreign exchange requirements. This sum was almost equal to the amount of the credit provided under the agreement with the Soviet Union and its realisation would effectively eliminate a need for an Egyptian contribution since the planners were well aware that Egypt itself was in need of external assistance for its large scale development programme.¹⁶

After the introduction of this agriculture-irrigation based ten-year programme, the UAR authorities formulated a supplementary five-year industrialisation plan for Syria which clearly indicated their eagerness to achieve economic diversification in the northern

¹⁴ Heydemann, 1999: 95-105.

¹⁵ EIU/QERS, 5 November 1958: 3; Asfour, 1959: 80-83; Sayigh, 1978: 260-261.

¹⁶ It is noteworthy to mention here that the US and British withdrawal in July 1956 of their commitment to finance the Aswan dam project had triggered the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company in July 1956 and the ensuing Suez War with Britain, France and Israel in the autumn of the same year. Subsequently, under agreements concluded in 1958 and 1960, Egypt relied on long-term Soviet credits for the construction of the two phases of the Aswan High Dam, the mainstay of the development programmes of the Nasser era. See *Mizan*, February 1962: 2-3; Robbins, 1965; Waterbury, 1983: 391-405.

region.¹⁷ According to the plan which was announced on 6 November 1958 by the Minister of Industry of the central government in Cairo and the Minister in charge of the new Ministry of Industry of the Syrian region of the UAR,¹⁸ 43 projects were to be carried out by 1964 at a cost of SL560 million. Moreover, in order to help implement this plan, the long-awaited Industrial Bank project was launched on 9 February 1959 after the placing of its shares in the market in late January. The Industrial Bank was authorised to borrow beyond the normal limit of twice its capital and receive 5-year loans from the Central Bank. The Syrian private sector was soon at the doors of the new bank; by mid-April it had credit applications for SL10 million and by the end of May loans amounting to SL13 million were already agreed.¹⁹

However, despite all the measures taken by the UAR authorities, problems and delays in achieving investment targets under the existing plans could not be averted.²⁰ Yet Nasser again raised the benchmark and set new and higher development targets during his visit to Syria on the occasion of the second anniversary of the formation of the union when he announced that the national income of Syria, like its Egyptian counterpart, had to be doubled within the space of ten years. Subsequently, both the 1958-1968 development programme and the industrial plan were discarded before they ran their full course and, after a fresh spate of activity a new Five-year Development Plan which was to be completed by 30 June 1965 came into operation on 1 July 1960.²¹ Thus the 1960/61-1964/65 plan aimed to raise the national income by forty percent from SL2,400 million in the base year to SL3,330 million in 1964-65. As Table 15 on the investment programme indicates, the first five-year plan envisaged a total investment of SL2,720 million in order to achieve its objectives. Since the plan was Syria's first comprehensive development plan that encompassed the private along with the public sector, the latter's share was fixed at SL1,720 million while the remaining SL1,000 million was to be contributed by the private sector.

¹⁷ EIU/QERS, 11 February 1959: 2-3; Tütsch, 1964: 82-83; Sayigh, 1978: 260-261.

¹⁸ The Syrian Ministry of Industry was established by Law No. 212 of 1958. Its main duties include regulation and encouragement of industry. See Nizam al-Din, n.d. [1993]: 2.

¹⁹ EIU/QERS, 30 April 1959: 4-6 and 10 August 1959: 4.

²⁰ For instance, the allocations for the industrial component of the programme, SL60.3 million for 1959-1960, could only be released after a delay of eight and a half months. EIU/QERS, 29 April 1960: 3.

²¹ The plan was promulgated by Presidential Decree No. 1327 of 18 July 1960. For assumptions, objectives, distribution of expenditures among the economic sectors and means of financing as well as a general analysis of its implementation, see *La Planification Économique et Social en R.A.S. 1960-1970*, n.d.: 40-53; *Rapport 1964-65*: 45-52. See also EIU/QERS, 29 April 1960: 2; 29 July 1960: 2 and 1 November 1960: 4 and 13-17. For the changes in macroeconomic indicators and a brief survey of the first five five-year plans covering 1961-1985, see Aghras, 1989: 369-375.

The sources of financing for the plan as summarised in Table 16 and the five-year foreign exchange budget²² show that the five-year plan's foreign exchange requirements were substantial. Of the total investment, SL1,495 million was to be in local currency while the equivalent of about SL1,225 million was required in foreign exchange. In addition to this sum, the five-year foreign exchange budget also included SL2,800 million for imports of consumption goods and raw materials, SL350 million for the repayment of external debt and SL250 million to replenish the reserves. On the other hand, exports were expected to contribute SL2,825 million towards the required total of SL4,625 million, the revenues from oil companies and their local expenditure by SL800 million and foreign credits by SL640 million.²³

6.4. Foreign Credits: A Marked Attempt at Diversification

As indicated by the development plans and foreign exchange budgets prepared during the union, the UAR authorities were well aware that the foreign exchange requirements of the Syrian economy could not be met without resorting to foreign credits. Soviet credits were still available through the Syrian-Soviet agreement that had been signed before the formation of the union as the Soviet Union did not withdraw its commitments nor did the UAR authorities cancel the agreement although Syria ceased to exist as an independent distinct political entity.

But, despite Soviet assurances that there were 'no political or military strings' attached to their aid,²⁴ developments following the signing of the agreement and culminating in the formation of the UAR were a testimony to its massive political significance. The agreement was unmistakably associated with the ascendancy of its architects such as Khalid al-'Azm, and with the surge in the popularity of the Syrian Communists who were bound to derive political gains from its full implementation even though they were sidelined after the formation of the union. Moreover, total reliance on Soviet credits and technical assistance for Syria's development projects could provide the Soviet Union with an undesirable leverage over the Union's affairs and as a result restrict UAR's freedom of action at least against local Communists who were seen as a threat to the regime. In deed, Soviet-UAR relations were characterised by occasional verbal duels

²² EIU/QERS, 1 November 1960: 4-5.

²³ EIU/QERS, 1 November 1960: 4-5.

²⁴ For a sample of Soviet writing on the subject, see *Mizan*, March 1960: 2-6 and December 1960: 2-5.

between President Nasser and the Soviet leader Khrushchev. Most of these clashes and the accompanying media wars were caused by the UAR regime's anti-Communist measures especially in Syria.²⁵ Therefore, although it covered all of Syria's major development projects and despite its favourable terms, the full implementation of the Syrian-Soviet agreement was avoided during the union years. Alternative credit and technical assistance suppliers were pursued and whenever they became available they were preferred to Soviet credits and technical assistance or equipment.

In contrast to the Soviet case, the award of Syrian contracts to the firms of other East European countries were less affected by the formation of the UAR because the officials of these countries reaffirmed their interests in Syrian economic development projects and stayed out of the occasional rows between the UAR and the Soviet Union over the former's treatment of local Communists. For example, in September 1958, the Hungarian Minister of Heavy Industry paid a visit to Syria. A month later he sent a memorandum to the Syrian Development Board listing the material, equipment and technical services which his country could supply to Syria against imports of agricultural products. The memorandum expressed Hungary's willingness to assist in development projects under Syria's ten-year plan and to provide technical aid for communication schemes.²⁶ Subsequently, a contract for the supply of telephone exchanges was awarded to a Hungarian company.²⁷ The firms of these socialist countries earned a good reputation since they completed their tasks on time and well within budget. Therefore, after the opening of the Homs refinery, the same Czechoslovakian company which constructed the refinery and also surveyed a bridge on the Euphrates at Raqqa was asked to survey another bridge at Deir-al-Zor.²⁸ Subsequently, it was awarded a \$12 million contract to supply and install electricity generating equipment of 30,000-kw capacity at the Homs thermal plant to bring the plant's total capacity to 36,100-kw.²⁹ In addition, following the signing of an agreement whereby the Syrian Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs was granted a five-year

²⁵ Lenczowski, 1972: 108; Batatu, 1978: 861-865. For a sample of Soviet press replies to UAR media articles, see *Mizan*, June 1961: 5-6.

²⁶ *MEED*, 10 October 1958: 299.

²⁷ *EIU/QERS*, 30 April 1959: 5.

²⁸ The contracts for the construction of the bridges amounting to SL10 million were awarded to a Yugoslav firm. *EIU/QERS*, 29 July 1960: 5; *ESE*, 1962: 22.

²⁹ The installation of the power units commenced at the beginning of 1963 and completed at the end of 1964. The inauguration ceremony, however, took place on 27 April 1965. *EIU/QERS*, 1 November 1960: 5; *Rapport 1964-65*: A71.

Czechoslovak credit equivalent to \$2.8 million for the import of vehicles and equipment for water and electrical projects, 46 village generators were ordered from Czechoslovakia.³⁰ The Bulgarian Techno-Impex was another Socialist Bloc firm which vied for significant development contracts. In July 1958, it was awarded the contract for the construction of a dam at Rastane and in January 1959 the contract for a dam at Meharde, both on the Orontes River. With a capacity to store enough water to irrigate 25,000 hectares of arable land and generate 7,800-kw hydro-electric power, the Rastane Dam is situated 17 kilometres north of Homs and was the biggest construction item in the Ghab Development Project. It was completed exactly within the scheduled 28 months. The smaller Meharde dam on the other hand was built near Hama, serves mainly to conserve flood waters and to regulate the flow of the river. Designed to generate 2,800-kw hydro-electric power, it was also completed in 1960.³¹

The attempts to find alternative credit suppliers were not always successful, and in such cases Soviet credits and technical assistance were used. After all, an outright rejection of Soviet aid was a luxury that could not be afforded by the UAR which as a whole had to rely on foreign economic and technical assistance. Thus, Soviet involvement in Syrian development efforts was still needed and continued, albeit in a watered down form, throughout the UAR period.

For instance, after the completion of the survey on the Latakia-Aleppo section of the Latakia-Aleppo-Kamishli railway project by a Belgian firm, a new public body, the 'Railway Construction Organisation' was established to oversee the building of the line. Moreover, a ministerial report was issued detailing the work, the sections and cost of the line. At that stage, instead of reaching a deal with the Soviet Union which had committed to provide the necessary financial and technical assistance under the 1957 Syrian-Soviet Agreement, the UAR authorities tried to secure World Bank credit to finance the project.³² It was only after the failure of this attempt that the UAR authorities settled for Soviet economic and technical aid for this and several other projects and eventually signed a protocol with the Soviet mission which had arrived in the spring of 1960 in order to review all of the projects covered under the original

³⁰ EIU/QERS, 31 January 1961: 3.

³¹ *Rapport 1971-72*: A103-104.

³² EIU/QERS, 9 February 1960: 5.

agreement.³³ According to the protocol which was concluded in September 1960, the Soviet Union undertook to allocate credits amounting to 275 million roubles (about SL250 million or \$70 million) to help finance the construction of the 770 km Kamishli-Aleppo-Latakia railway, a nitrogenous fertiliser plant, a lubricating oil factory and the expansion of prospecting for oil and other minerals.³⁴ Moreover, as three years had already passed without contracts signed for most of the major development projects included in the list annexed to the original agreement, the protocol modified the terms of the agreement and allowed drawings on the Soviet credit throughout the whole period necessary to finish any project.³⁵

Following the signing of the protocol, Soviet technicians undertook a review of the Belgian blueprint for the railway line and suggested substantial modifications in their final report on the Latakia-Aleppo section in the summer of 1961.³⁶ Although the final report on the Aleppo-Kamishli section was expected to be ready by the end of the 1962 and the declared aim was to finish construction at the end of 1965, actual work on the project lacked the required momentum to meet the projected deadline mainly due to regime changes in Syria. As it turned out, no more than 231 km of railway were laid by 1965, the year the project was originally planned to be completed.³⁷ The inauguration of the line had to wait for another ten years³⁸ despite the occasional discussions to speed up the implementation of the project.³⁹ The formal hand-over of the line to the Directorate-General of Syrian Railways, on the other hand, took place on 28 January 1981 after the completion of ancillary facilities although two trains had already been running daily in each direction carrying an average of 3,800 passengers a day. The second biggest Syrian development project not only took much longer to complete but

³³ Lenczowski, 1972: 109.

³⁴ *Mizan*, September 1960: 12-13; EIU/QERS, 1 November 1960: 5; Ca'fari, 1987: 353.

³⁵ Under the original agreement of October 1957 the offered credit had to be used within the following seven-year period. Following the modification, for a long-term project such as the Kamishli-Latakia railway, for example, Soviet credit and technical assistance were to be available until the completion date instead of only until October 1964.

³⁶ EIU/QERS, 10 August 1961: 6; The statement by the Director-General of the Syrian Railway Construction Organisation as reproduced in BBC/SWB, No. 765, 11 October 1961.

³⁷ *Rapport 1965-1966*: A63-A65.

³⁸ The inauguration took place on 16 November 1975, the fifth anniversary of President Hafez al-Asad's initiation of the 'Corrective Movement'. *MEES*, 21 November 1975: 10.

³⁹ For instance, in a Syrian-Soviet protocol signed on 11 July 1970 and ratified on 31 January 1971, it was stated that 'the two sides agreed to study the question of pursuing co-operation in the field of construction of railways during 1972 to achieve the implementation of the greatest possible volume of work concerning Kamishli- Latakia project, by deriving the maximum benefit from the machinery and equipment previously imported from the Soviet Union.' *Rapport 1970-1971*: C35-C41.

also cost more than the initial estimates. While the initial estimates ranged between SL370-400 million in the early 1960s,⁴⁰ the total cost of the 758-kilometre line which linked production centres in the east and north-east with Latakia Port reached SL900 million (\$230 million) by September 1980 shortly before the formal hand-over.⁴¹

6.4.1. Euphrates Project: UAR-West German Agreement

After the signing of the protocol which paved the way for the Soviet Union to undertake the implementation of the Kamishli-Latakia railway and several other development projects, the Euphrates dam scheme became a focus of attention. The scheme had topped the list of the projects that were to be implemented under the 28 October 1957 Syrian-Soviet Economic and Technical Co-operation Agreement. However, in spite of the undergoing negotiations with Soviet officials for the conclusion of a specific contract that would enable drawing on the loan and technical assistance pledged in the agreement of 1957,⁴² a credit offer by the West German Government was followed up and a high level delegation led by Vice-President Baghdadi was sent to Bonn in June 1961 to work out the details.⁴³ Subsequently, on 5 July 1961, a UAR-West German credit agreement was concluded and the amount of the credit earmarked for the foreign exchange requirements of the Euphrates scheme was set at DM500 million (\$125 million or about SL450 million).⁴⁴

Therefore, in terms of its cost, size and potential benefits, the Euphrates scheme was the most significant of Syrian development projects or in other words, it was the jewel in the crown. It was once referred to as 'the biggest hydro-engineering complex in the Arab East'⁴⁵ by the Soviet *Izvestiya* newspaper which like many others shared the view that the benefits to be derived from its implementation such as influence and prestige would go to the Soviet Union which had offered to meet the foreign exchange and technical know-how requirements of the entire project. But the UAR authorities, ever aware of the political significance of such a gigantic project entailed, snubbed the Soviet Union and preferred a credit agreement with West Germany even though it did not offer

⁴⁰ EIU/QERS, 9 February 1960: 5; *ESE*, 1963: 39.

⁴¹ *MEED*, 6 March 1981.

⁴² EIU/QERS, 1 November 1960: 5.

⁴³ *MEED*, 23 June 1961: 287-288.

⁴⁴ The agreement provided for another DM500 million (DM150 million in the form of a loan and the rest in the form of German government guarantees for borrowing from private sources) for various transport projects in Egypt. EIU/QERS, 10 August 1961: 2-3; *ESE*, 1962: 24.

⁴⁵ *Izvestiya* of 29 August 1959 cited in *Mizan*, February 1962: 3.

better terms compared to the Soviet offer under the 1957 agreement: First of all, West Germany conditioned its credit offer on Iraqi and Turkish approval of the project, or in other words on a water-sharing agreement between the three riparian states. This condition had all the potential to delay the implementation of the project and shortly after the signing of the credit agreement, the Iraqis issued statements to the effect that the dam might cause harm to agriculture in north-west Iraq.⁴⁶ Moreover, Syria would have to repay the credit in hard currency while the Soviet agreement had provided for repayments in local products. The interest rate applied to the West German credit was also higher than its Soviet counterpart by at least 1 percentage point and the repayment period was four years shorter, making it less advantageous in financial terms. However, interest shown by West German companies in the scheme and the subsequent credit offer by the West German government presented the UAR authorities, who were determined to narrow the scope of Soviet involvement in Syrian development projects, with the opportunity they had been yearning for. No time was wasted by the UAR authorities and the jewel in the crown was placed in West German hands rather than, as some sceptics of Soviet economic and technical assistance maintained, in 'Russian tentacles'.⁴⁷

However, the Syrian-Egyptian Union came to an end before the anticipated effects of the agreement could be felt. The agreement posed a challenge to the leaders of the Separatist regime who would have the tough task of convincing the West German government that Syria alone by its own means could meet its obligations under the agreement since the West German side would question the financial viability of the Syrian economy to provide the necessary funds for local expenses of the gigantic project and repay the credit afterwards.

⁴⁶ Obtaining the approval of the riparian states for the project raised the wider and thorny question of the partition of the Euphrates waters. After over half a century, no formula has proved acceptable to all three parties concerned. Lack of a permanent agreement has caused at least two major crises, the first between Syria and Iraq in 1975 when the former filled the lake created by the Dam on the Euphrates (Tabqa or Lake Asad as it is known in Syria) and the second in 1990 which pitted Syria and Iraq against Turkey when the latter temporarily stopped the river's flow to fill the Ataturk Dam, the centrepiece of its gigantic Southeast Anatolia Project. Relevant works on the issue include Bölükbaşı, 1993; Kut, 1993; Picard, 1993: 155-173; Jouejati, 1996: 131-146; Hamash, 1997: 225-242.

⁴⁷ The UAR authorities' efforts to limit the scope of Soviet involvement in Syrian development projects were resourcefully described by the EIU analysts as 'a gentle pulling-away from Russian tentacles'. EIU/QERS, 12 August 1958: 1.

6.4.2. American Aid to Syria

As mentioned earlier, President Nasser's efforts to lessen the scope of the Syrian-Soviet agreement of 1957 was duly noted by the US Consulate in Damascus and communicated to the US administration which was, in the course of 1958, switching to a more constructive policy towards President Nasser and the UAR. In line with this new policy, the US administration agreed to give the UAR economic assistance, the withholding of which had soured US-Egyptian relations and had led directly to Egyptian nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company in 1956. Soon, Egypt became, on a per capita basis, the largest consumer in the world of American surplus food and US assistance constituted a major source on which the Egyptian region of the UAR relied to cover its growing budget deficits.⁴⁸ Moreover, as the effects of the successive drought years were reaching outstanding proportions in Syria and the resulting burden of cereal imports was exerting increasing pressure on the economy,⁴⁹ the UAR-US agreement which provided for supply of American surplus food to Egypt was extended to Syria. After an initial diversion of American wheat from Egypt,⁵⁰ an agreement was signed in November 1959 under which Syria received 75,000 tons of wheat and the same amount of barley valued at \$9.6 million. The agreement signified more than a bilateral trade transaction, indeed, it amounted to an economic assistance agreement since half the payment was to be reserved for economic development loans in the Syrian region and another 25 percent was to be extended in loans to Syrian private sector firms.⁵¹ Under another agreement concluded in August 1960, Syria received American wheat and flour to a value of \$17 million.⁵² Hence, in 1960 alone Syria received about 170,000 tons of wheat worth \$22 million from the USA. This constituted almost three quarters of Syria's total wheat imports in 1960.⁵³ Moreover, during the first six months of 1961 wheat deliveries from the US under similar agreements amounted to 110,000 tons.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Petran, 1972: 130; Waterbury, 1983: 399; Guess, 1987: 240.

⁴⁹ Food import which included cereal imports had registered only slight fluctuations in the 1955-1958 four-year period and averaged SL71 million per year. But due to increased imports of cereals during the drought years, the annual average of food imports surged to SL123 million in the 1959-1962 four-year period. In 1963, a year of bumper crops, food imports fell back to normal levels and totalled only about SL70 million. *ESE*, 1963: 107.

⁵⁰ EIU/QERS, 22 October 1959: 5.

⁵¹ The remaining quarter was reserved for local US expenses. The sale was made possible by the US Public Law 480 which provided for payment in local currency. *MEED*, 20 November 1959: 521; EIU/QERS, 9 February 1960: 4.

⁵² EIU/QERS, 1 November 1960: 2.

⁵³ The remaining 58,000 tons were supplied by, France, Tunisia, Australia and Turkey. *MEED*, 10 November 1961: 500.

⁵⁴ EIU/QERS, 31 January 1961: 6; *MEED*, 10 November 1961: 500.

While imports of this magnitude helped elevate the US to the status of the Syria's main supplier,⁵⁵ the agreements which facilitated this trade removed earlier Syrian reservations towards the US aid almost without any debate. Shortly afterwards, an economic and technical agreement was also signed with the United States⁵⁶ and a \$5 million DFL loan to the Syrian Industrial Bank was announced.⁵⁷ Additionally, UAR authorities concluded, on behalf of Syria, a stand-by arrangement with the IMF for the drawing of up to \$7.5 million⁵⁸ and subsequently used \$5 million of that amount to avert the Syrian currency crisis which was exacerbated by the unfavourable trade balance at the end of 1960.⁵⁹ While these agreements and loans meant a departure from the past for Syria, they were also part of a deliberate US policy which recognised the impact of economic assistance on relations between states and the importance of reaching economic objectives for the survival of political regimes.⁶⁰ Hence, US economic aid to the Syrian region of the UAR was considered vital for the continuation of the US-UAR *rapprochement* and was also extended to keep Syria within the confines of the UAR whose rulers were working to limit the scope of Soviet involvement in Syrian development projects and repressing local Communists. Although the new American thinking and the economic aid policy which accompanied it did not suffice to keep Syria within the UAR, the acceptance of US aid in Syria was a measure of change in Syrian political dynamics during the union years. As we shall see, rather than trying to reverse this change, the leaders of the following Separatist regime would choose to benefit from it and pursue economic aid in Western capitals.

6.4.3. Diversification and Economic Development Performance

During Syria's union with Egypt the need for foreign assistance, both financial and technical, was acknowledged by planning experts and approved by the political leaders of the regime as the adopted development plans and foreign exchange budgets testified. However, during the three and a half years of the union Nasser's regime tried to dilute

⁵⁵ In 1958, the US supplied 8.6 percent of all Syrian imports. As Syria became a PL 480 food aid recipient, the share of the US in Syrian imports nearly doubled and reached 14.3 percent and 15.3 percent of the total in 1960 and 1961 respectively. See Table 3.

⁵⁶ The agreement was signed on 2 April 1960. EIU/QERS, 29 April 1960: 3.

⁵⁷ EIU/QERS, 1 November 1960: 5.

⁵⁸ EIU/QERS, 29 July 1960: 5.

⁵⁹ Standing at SL3.73=\$1 at the end of August 1960 the Syrian currency slipped to 3.98 to a dollar in November. Apart from the IMF loan, UAR authorities transferred £0.5 million from Egypt. EIU/QERS, 31 January 1961: 2.

⁶⁰ See Mufti, 1996: 130-131.

the Syrian-Soviet economic and technical cooperation agreement of October 1957 which was designed to meet the foreign exchange requirements of almost all Syrian development projects provided that it was fully implemented and instead sought alternative aid from other quarters. Consequently, Soviet economic and technical aid to Syria was kept to a minimum and other credit and technical assistance agreements, which at times provided for credit with less favourable conditions, were signed. The largest among them in scope was without doubt the agreement with West Germany which covered the Euphrates project. Moreover, the sceptical attitude towards US aid and loans from international institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF which had been an important factor in preventing earlier Syrian regimes from resorting to such aid or loans was put aside. Subsequently, US grain supplies provided under concessionary terms played a vital role in alleviating the effects of a series of droughts which substantially reduced Syrian agricultural output and the proceeds of these supplies were contracted as loans for Syrian development projects under agreements signed with the American administration which also gave the green light for the granting of DFL loans. In addition, other loans were contracted from the IMF under a stand-by agreement. Thus a certain measure of diversification of credit suppliers was achieved but at a cost, at least in the form of delays, was also paid. Therefore, public sector development spending proceeded more slowly than planned and this in turn affected the implementation of development projects in Syria. For instance, in the first year of the first five-year development plan, the public sector failed to provide its part and invested only SL286 million out of the SL376 million projected public sector expenditure or in other words only about 76 percent of its share.⁶¹ On the other hand, despite the regime's distrust and obstructions which were epitomised in the form of nationalisation decrees, the private sector's contribution to gross domestic fixed capital formation in the whole of 1961 was fifty percent higher than the public sector's share since it provided SL270.5 million out of the total of SL465.8 in 1961.⁶²

⁶¹ *La Planification Économique et Social en R.A.S 1960-1970*: 50.

⁶² *SSA*, 1964: 388. These relatively higher investment figures for the private sector were attributed to 'Syrian capitalists' determination to frustrate Egyptian efforts to sabotage Syria's industrial development by Tabitha Petran who in general is critical of the UAR. Yusif Sayigh, a more sympathetic observer, attributes the Syrian private sector's fine investment performance to 'the indomitable entrepreneurial spirit of Syrian businessmen'. Petran, 1972: 139; Sayigh, 1978: 263. Also see Heydemann, 1999: 126-127.

6.5. The End of the Union and the Formation of a Separatist Regime

On 28 September 1961, a group of Syrian army officers in Damascus led a military coup d'état that brought about the end of the United Arab Republic after three and a half years of existence and restored Syrian sovereignty.⁶³ After a brief period of uncertainty and tension during which Egyptian naval units and paratroopers were dispatched to reinforce the army units in Syria that had not yet rallied to the coup, President Nasser called off the military operation and accepted the *fait accompli*.⁶⁴ Yet, although he subsequently granted *de facto* recognition to the new Syrian regime by not opposing its re-admission to the United Nations and the Arab League,⁶⁵ President Nasser stopped short of recognising (*de jure*) the new regime at Damascus. Consequently, relations between the new Syrian regime and Cairo remained strained throughout the duration of the former and contributed to its instability and finally to its overthrow on 8 March 1963 by another military coup d'état.

The elites of the Separatist Regime included the army officers who were responsible for the coup that brought the end of the union with Egypt and a heterogeneous coalition of civilian politicians.⁶⁶ Although their dissatisfaction with the union and their resolve to preserve an independent sovereign Syria as a distinct political entity united them, they were sharply divided over major issues such as the role of the military, political parties, freedom of expression, and perhaps most importantly organisation of Syria's political economy. Despite condemning Nasserist authoritarianism, adopting a democratic discourse in their communiqués and statements issued in the immediate aftermath of the coup and the subsequent handing over of formal authority to civilian politicians, the leaders of the Syrian army considered themselves the final arbiters, frequently intervened in politics and vetoed major policies during the Separatist Period. They also succeeded in institutionalising their participation in the political process through the formation of a 'National Security Council' (*Majlis al-amn al-qawmi*), whose function

⁶³ On the first day of the coup, a total of sixteen communiqués and a few statements were broadcast by Damascus radio which was controlled by the rebelling officers who called themselves 'The Supreme Arab

Revolutionary Command of the Armed Forces.' For the texts of these communiqués and statements and President Nasser's two broadcasts issued on the same day, see *Orient*, No. 19, 1961: 177-194 or BBC/SWB, No. 755, 29 September 1961 and No. 756, 30 September 1961.

⁶⁴ Tütsch, 1964: 86; Petran, 1972: 149.

⁶⁵ Syria took its seat in the United Nations on 13 October 1961 and was re-admitted to the membership in the Arab League on 29 October 1961. *Middle East Journal*, 'Chronology', 1961: 79-80.

⁶⁶ Following the coup these officers formed a ten-man Army Command. For regional and sectarian background of these officers, see Van Dusen, 1971: 375-414; van Dam, 1979: 48, note 44.

they defined as ‘formulation of the broad lines of the state policy’.⁶⁷ Largely due to the military’s pressure, emergency laws were retained almost until the very end of the regime; demands for democratisation such as lifting of the ban on political parties and restoration of freedom of the press and civil liberties were left unmet. Nevertheless, due to the existence of separate factions among its ranks and lack of unity over the policies to be followed, the Syrian military’s ability to force its will on the civilian authority was also limited, and the semblance of a civilian rule was maintained throughout most of the Separatist Period. On the other hand, the heterogeneous civilian coalition included politicians from veteran political parties such as the People’s Party and the National Party, the Muslim Brethren, independents associated with land owners and merchants as well as Hawrani’s wing of the Ba’th Party⁶⁸ and progressive independents among whom Khalid al-‘Azm was the most prominent.⁶⁹ Having been severely suppressed and outlawed by the union authorities, the Syrian Communists also welcomed the dissolution of the union⁷⁰ but were excluded by the regime and their leader, Khalid Bakdash, was refused permission to disembark when he arrived in Damascus on a Czechoslovakian airliner.⁷¹ The members of this broad civilian coalition and politically minded officers had diverse and at times incompatible views concerning major issues and failed to reach a consensus or compromises acceptable to all sides that would enable them to successfully tackle the challenges confronted throughout the period. Thus, unsurprisingly, the Separatist Period was characterised by military interventions, occasional civilian unrest, suspension of parliamentary rule and frequent cabinet

⁶⁷ The Army Command retained a majority in the Council which also included the President and five key ministers. See Petran, 1972: 152; Rabinovich, 1972: 29.

⁶⁸ The Ba’th Party was split over Syria’s separation from Egypt. Of the two main factions, Hawrani and his followers supported Syria’s separation from Egypt unequivocally and acted as a separate party although the split was not formalised until May 1962 when Aflaq-Bitar faction finally came out with a middle-of-the-road-position rejecting both secessionism and return to union under President Nasser’s terms. Bitar who initially endorsed the separation had to make a U-turn and repudiate his signature on the ‘National Covenant’ which is subject of the next note. For the profound effects of the failure of the UAR on the Ba’th Party, see Abu Jaber, 1966: 50-65; Rabinovich, 1972: 36-43; Betz, 1973: 39-47; Devlin, 1976: 169-209; Carre, 1980: 191-192; Roberts, 1987: 51-54.

⁶⁹ Most of the leading politicians of the pre-union period were among those who confirmed their blessing of the Separatist regime in a ‘National Covenant’ issued on 19 November 1961. The Covenant was signed by over 60 politicians including Ma’mun al-Kuzbari, Bashir al-‘Azma, Akram al-Hawrani, Khalid al-‘Azm, Salah al-Din al-Bitar, Sabri al-‘Asali, Said al-Ghazi, Rashad Barmada, Sultan al-Atrash etc. See BBC/SWB, No. 793, 13 November 1961. Extracts of the Covenant can also be found in *Orient*, 1962, No. 21: 145-147.

⁷⁰ In a declaration of the SCP, the dissolution of the union was hailed as ‘an historic victory won by the Syrian people in co-operation with the army.’ The declaration added that under the former government ‘thousands of patriots were thrown into prison, law-abiding citizens were killed in torture chambers, and brother was set against brother.’ The declaration was published in the Lebanese newspaper, *an-Nida* and reported in *Mizan*, October 1961: 21.

⁷¹ Jargy, 1961: 69; Ramet, 1990: 32.

turnovers. During this brief period, seven separate governments under five prime ministers were formed.⁷²

6.5.1. Cairo's Shadow and Recognition

The first government of the Separatist regime stayed in power for less than two months and its policy statements remained as documents of intention rather than action.⁷³ However, Ma'mun al-Kuzbari's transitional government acted swiftly to shore up the international standing of the new regime by demanding official recognition from states⁷⁴ which initially hesitated to grant such a recognition in the face of open hostility from Nasser's Egypt⁷⁵ especially after the latter broke off diplomatic relations with Jordan and Turkey, the two countries which promptly recognised the new Syrian regime.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, only three more states extended their recognition before President Nasser's announcement on 5 October 1961 that he had requested his Foreign Ministry not to hinder Syria's admission to the Arab League while other states waited for President Nasser's acquiescence in Syria's secession.⁷⁷

6.5.2. *Rapprochement* with Neighbours

The endeavour to obtain immediate international recognition was followed by a policy of *rapprochement* with the neighbouring Arab countries. This policy of *rapprochement* helped the leaders of the Separatist regime to counter Cairo's accusations that Syria's split from Egypt amounted to 'a stab in the heart of the unity and in the heart of Arab nationalism.'⁷⁸ It was initiated by Ma'mun Kuzbari's government which was anxious to demonstrate its pan-Arab credentials and was also adhered to by the successive

⁷² The following are the names of the prime ministers of the Separatist Regime and the dates they formed or reshuffled cabinets: Ma'mun al-Kuzbari, 29 September 1961; 'Izzat al-Nuss, 21 November 1961; Ma'ruf al-Dawalibi, 15 January 1962; Bashir al-'Azma, 16 April 1962 and 20 June 1962; Khalid al-'Azma, 18 September 1962 and 16 February 1963.

⁷³ 'The Syrian Government's Statement of Policy' and 'The Syrian Government's Social and Economic Policy' are reproduced in BBC/SWB, No. 757, 2 October 1961 and BBC/SWB, No. 772, 19 October 1961 respectively.

⁷⁴ The requests for formal recognition were made on 30 September 1961 but states such as the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and East Germany waited until 7 October, two days after Nasser's statement while other East European, Arab and Western states soon followed suit. For samples of texts of letters of recognition, see BBC/SWB, No. 764, 10 October 1961 and No. 765, 11 October 1961.

⁷⁵ Despite Syria's secession, Nasser's Egypt continued to call itself 'the United Arab Republic'.

⁷⁶ Both Turkey and Jordan recognised the new Syrian regime the day after Syria's secession from the union. For the text of the telegram conveying Jordan's recognition in jubilant terms, see BBC/SWB, No. 756, 30 September 1961. On Turkey's recognition, see Kushner, 1986: 86; Soysal, 1991: 59.

⁷⁷ As President Nasser's statement confirmed, these three states were Iran, Nationalist China (Taiwan) and Guatemala. For the text of Nasser's broadcast, see BBC/SWB, No. 762, 7 October 1961.

⁷⁸ See President Nasser's first broadcast following the news of a Syrian army revolt as reproduced in BBC/SWB, No. 755, 29 September 1961.

governments of the Separatist regime. But economic considerations had a paramount significance too. Trade with Arab countries, which had been very important customers for Syria's products, had suffered considerably during the union⁷⁹ as the new regime's Minister of Economy and Industry Awad Barakat also drew attention.⁸⁰ It is true that the volume of trade with Egypt during the union years had expanded considerably as demonstrated by Table 5⁸¹ mainly due to the introduction and implementation of measures which aimed at the reduction of trade barriers between the two regions of the UAR.⁸² However, the fact that the decline of exports to Arab countries was partly compensated by exports to Egypt added more urgency to the need to restore Syria's products to their former place on the Arab market as economic and political relations were frozen when the union ended. Hence, on the initiation of the Damascus authorities, Barakat led a large group of government officials and businessmen to Iraq at the end of October and following the talks with their Iraqi counterparts, an agreement on economic co-operation was signed on 3 November.⁸³ Under the agreement the two sides promised each other preferential treatment in allocating import and export licences and except for specified industrial products, exempted locally produced goods from customs duty. Moreover, the two sides agreed to facilitate transfer of capital, encourage joint investment, further transit trade through Syria and make the necessary arrangements for the freedom of movement and employment. Finally, they decided to form a joint Syrian-Iraqi committee that was to meet at least once in every six months to supervise the working of the agreement and make recommendations for further co-operation. Following its conclusion Awad Barakat hailed the agreement as an exemplar for inter-Arab relations and praised it for being a 'bold step' and different from other Arab agreements in 'opening new vistas for future economic expansion'. Its immediate effect, he added, would be a tenfold increase in bilateral trade but its long term and more important effect was in laying a sound foundation for Arab economic co-operation.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Total exports in the first three years of the union (1958-1960) to Arab countries other than Egypt averaged SL126 million and compared poorly with the annual average of SL194 million registered during the three pre-union years (1955-1957). See Table 3.

⁸⁰ BBC/SWB, No. 763, 9 October 1961.

⁸¹ Trade with Egypt did not count as foreign trade during the union and as such did not appear in direction of trade tables in the *Syrian Statistical Abstract*. However, trade figures with Egypt were published in another publication (*ESE*) which is the source of Table 5.

⁸² For a brief summary of these measures, see Heydemann, 1999: 96.

⁸³ For the full text of the agreement, see BBC/SWB, Weekly Economic Supplement, No. W134, 9 November 1961.

⁸⁴ BBC/SWB, No. 787, 6 November 1961.

Following the December elections, an Iraqi mission led by the Iraqi Foreign Minister Hashim Jawad visited Damascus where he met Syria's elected leaders and held discussions. Consequently they issued a joint communiqué through which they declared their support for the liberation of the 'Arab territories still afflicted by the rule and influence of imperialism'. Moreover, they proclaimed their agreement to begin immediate discussions to co-ordinate military affairs with a view to establishing defence co-operation between the two countries 'to ensure their security and the Arab world's security and liberation'.⁸⁵ It is worthwhile at this junction to point out that the Iraqi regime had broken off diplomatic relations with a number of states which had recognised Kuwait and was still referring to the latter as 'the usurped district afflicted by imperialism'.⁸⁶ Moreover, despite gaining its independence Kuwait was still protected by an agreement which provided for British military assistance. As such Kuwait was being presented as a threat to Iraq's security and in need of liberation. Thus, since the Qasim regime in Iraq was still pursuing its claim to sovereignty over Kuwait and since this claim was being presented as an integral part of the Iraqi conceptions of 'security and liberation', agreement on these issues could be interpreted as an attempt on the part of the Iraqi regime to obtain the Syrian regime's endorsement of its policy towards Kuwait. In return, Qasim's regime was adopting a conciliatory stance concerning the sharing of the waters of the Euphrates since the joint communiqué also announced that 'the two sides welcomed the establishment of irrigation projects in their respective countries to the mutual interests of the two States' and that 'the two sides will be ready at any time to enter into any necessary talks to achieve this.'

The Iraqi regime's drive to obtain Syria's support for its claim over Kuwait became more evident following a meeting of the Syrian President Nazim al-Qudsi and the Iraqi Prime Minister 'Abd al-Karim Qasim in the Iraqi border town of Rutba on 14 and 15 March 1962. In their joint declaration, the two leaders invited other Arab states to a conference to be held within three months at a place and time decided by the majority of the participating Arab states to formulate and conclude military, economic and cultural

⁸⁵ Text of the joint Iraqi-Syrian communiqué as reproduced in BBC/SWB, No. 854, 26 January 1962.

⁸⁶ On 25 June 1961, six days after Kuwait gained its independence from Britain, the Iraqi ruler 'Abd al-Karim Qasim demanded that Kuwait be returned to Iraq. His demand was based, as Charles Tripp maintains, on the assertion that Kuwait had been a district of the Ottoman province of Basra, unjustly detached by the British from the main body of the Iraqi state when it had been created in the 1920s. See Tripp, 2000: 163-167. See also Khadduri, 1969: 166-173; Dann, 1969: 349-353; Penrose and Penrose, 1978: 254-281.

co-operation agreements ‘in order to bring about a gradual and evolutionary Arab union consistent with the circumstances and needs of each member country.’⁸⁷ Given that the ‘Arab Cold War’ was going through one of its severe phases at the time,⁸⁸ the leaders of both countries probably knew that the call for these agreements was a public relations exercise. However, the importance of the meeting lay somewhere else: the plans such as Greater Syria, Fertile Crescent as well as the plans concerning the amirates of the Arab Gulf⁸⁹ were all renounced as imperialist schemes. Still more significantly, although Kuwait was already an independent state and a full member of the League of Arab States, the issue of Iraq’s claim to Kuwait was at the top of the agenda and was directly linked to Iraq’s security. As stated in the joint communiqué:

The conferees discussed the menace of imperialism in the Arab area in general and British imperialism in the Arab Gulf area in particular, as well as Iraq’s right to Kuwait. The two sides agreed that this question is of importance to the general safety of the Arab countries and is associated with the very safety of Iraq, that it is in the interests of the Arabs that this question should be solved by peaceful means, and that it should be discussed on an all-Arab level at the forthcoming conference.

Thus, it was the Iraqi regime which was seeking Syrian support on an issue which had almost become a major source of embarrassment for it following the climb-down in the face of the British show of force and in return was offering economic and military co-operation as well as prospects of an agreement over the sharing of the waters of the Euphrates. The latter was, of course, one of the conditions put forward by the West German government for it to provide the much-needed financial and technical assistance to Syria’s biggest development project.

Despite the Syrian army revolt on 28 March 1962 and the subsequent change of government, the Iraqi-Syrian economic co-operation agreement of 3 November 1961 remained intact and the joint Syrian-Iraqi committee provided for under the agreement, met in Damascus between 10 and 18 June 1962. Following a general review of the economic conditions in both countries and particularly those related to industrial development projects, the committee adopted recommendations aimed at doubling of bilateral trade, free movement of capital and labour, harmonisation of economic

⁸⁷ Text of the joint Iraqi-Syrian communiqué as reproduced in BBC/SWB, No. 898, 19 March 1962.

⁸⁸ For details see Kerr, 1971: 26-43.

⁸⁹ The latter referred to British efforts to bring Bahrain, Qatar and the Trucial States to form a federation.

legislation and regulations. Concerning industrial co-operation, which was the main focus of the discussions, the committee recommended the formation of a permanent joint committee of experts to prepare and suggest an industrial co-ordination plan and to meet every three months to supervise its implementation alongside a technical office to be set up at the Ministry of Industry of each of the two countries.⁹⁰ The economic co-operation agreement, the contacts between the leaders of the two regimes and the meetings and recommendations of the joint committee yielded results and resulted in increased trade activity. However, the real beneficiary was Syria as its exports to Iraq which had declined to a mere SL2.5 million in 1960, rose to SL 8.9 million at the end of 1961 and reached its pre-union levels at SL21.6 million in 1962.⁹¹ Moreover, during the rule of the Separatist regime, reports of planned meetings of Syrian and Iraqi technical committees to discuss the implementation of Syria's Euphrates project prevailed over any Iraqi potential objections which would hamper if not prevent the conclusion a foreign credit agreement for the project.⁹²

Following the conclusion of the agreement with Iraq at the beginning of November 1961, a Syrian delegation led again by the Syrian Minister of Economy and Industry paid a visit to Saudi Arabia and a week of discussions with a Saudi delegation headed by the Saudi Minister of Finance, Amir Nawwaf Bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, were concluded with the promulgation of a joint communiqué⁹³ and the signing of an economic co-operation agreement on 16 November 1961.⁹⁴ Like the Syrian-Iraqi agreement, the Syrian-Saudi agreement included provisions to promote capital investments and trade exchanges. Accordingly, the two sides granted each other the most-favoured nation status, agreed to exempt industrial products manufactured from local raw materials as well as agricultural and animal products from customs duties and import licences. Moreover, the Syrian negotiators also obtained a two-year postponement of the repayment of the Saudi loan of 1955 but also promised that their government would

⁹⁰ In its broadcast on the joint committee's work, the Baghdad radio reported that the Iraqi Council of State had endorsed the Cabinet's approval of the recommendations. For Damascus and Baghdad Radio's report of the recommendations, see BBC/SWB, No. 983, 30 June 1962.

⁹¹ Table 3.

⁹² On 12 July 1962, Baghdad Radio reported that a Syrian technical committee studying the implementation of the project was to meet Iraqi and Turkish technical committees. See BBC/SWB, Weekly Economic Supplement, No. W170, 19 July 1962. For similar reports, see BBC/SWB, Weekly Economic Supplement, No. W174, 16 August 1962; *MEED*, 28 September 1962: 430; EIU/QERS, 12 February 1963: 4.

⁹³ The text of the joint communiqué is reproduced in BBC/SWB, No. 798, 18 November 1961.

⁹⁴ The text of the agreement is reproduced in BBC/SWB, No. 800, 21 November 1961.

take the necessary measures to ensure the complete rights of the Saudi National Commercial Bank in Damascus which had been nationalised during Syria's union with Egypt.

Therefore, within six weeks after Syria regained its independence, relations with Iraq and Saudi Arabia were put on a new footing. Alongside Jordan, which, much to the annoyance of Cairo, was among the first two states to recognise the new regime in Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia eagerly endorsed the new regime and demonstrated their support by concluding economic co-operation agreements which opened their markets to Syrian exports which had remained depressed during Syria's union with Egypt.⁹⁵

6.5.3. The Pressing Financial Bottleneck

While these agreements could help Syria in its attempts to compensate for the anticipated loss of the Egyptian market and also cut its trade deficit, their effect was not bound to be felt immediately. Besides, the perennial problem of lack of sufficient resources for sustainable economic development and the more immediate financial difficulties inherited from the union period required more action on the part of the governments of the Separatist regime. These governments saw the problem in two aspects. In the longer term, they hoped that the signs of heavy rainfall would herald the end of the drought years and that would result in bumper crops which in turn would increase export earnings and reduce the need for extensive import of agricultural products. Moreover, they hoped that they would be able to obtain long-term foreign credits to finance vital development projects. However, in their endeavours to overcome immediate financial difficulties and more particularly the shortage of foreign exchange they estimated that around \$50 million was needed to see the country through until the harvests.⁹⁶ Consequently, economic missions were sent to Western capitals and to the Soviet Union to obtain the estimated amount. Moreover, talks were held with international economic organisations.

⁹⁵ Syria's other Arab neighbour Lebanon, however, adopted a cautious attitude in the aftermath of the September coup in Syria. As the experts of the EIU maintained, Lebanon's attempt to sail between the Scylla and Charybdis failed and offended both Syria and Egypt. EIU/QERS, 30 April 1962: 9.

⁹⁶ EIU/QERS, 30 April 1962: 6.

6.5.4. Higher Oil Transit Fees, the Tapline's Turn

But before approaching other countries, the Kuzbari Government re-opened the protracted negotiations with Tapline in a bid to obtain higher transit fees for the oil carried through the Syrian section of the pipeline linking Saudi Arabian fields to the Lebanese terminal of Sidon. Negotiations with Tapline had been going on for several years but had failed due to the difficulties involved in reaching an agreement between the company and the four countries crossed by the pipeline.⁹⁷ After the arrival of the chairman of Tapline in Damascus during the last week of October,⁹⁸ and the Syrian government's decision to reach a unilateral agreement,⁹⁹ extended negotiations finally produced a successful conclusion at the end of November.¹⁰⁰ Under the agreement which was signed on 25 February 1962 and ratified by the Syrian Assembly within the following week, fees payable to Syria were to be calculated on a mile/tonnage basis instead of the annual flat rate. Accordingly, Syrian annual revenue from the pipeline was expected to treble from SL4 million to SL13 million or from \$1.2 million to \$4 million. More significantly, the company agreed to make a back payment of \$10 million.¹⁰¹

6.5.5. Tapping into the West and Steps towards Economic Liberalisation

The task of raising the remaining \$40 million of the needed \$50 million rested on the shoulders of the Ma'ruf al-Dawalibi government which was formed following the December elections. Benefiting from the legacy of the union which had made Western economic assistance acceptable by removing the pre-union reluctance about political consequences of such assistance, the Dawalibi government declared that it welcomed 'credit facilities and unconditional foreign loans from all states' and that it believed that there would be 'opportunities for co-operation with foreign funds when such co-operation is useful and fruitful and has no exploitative designs or political restrictions

⁹⁷ A settlement of the sharing of the payments by Tapline between Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria as early as 1957 had failed due to Syria's objection to the proportion allocated to Saudi Arabia. Tapline had agreed to a 50-50 split of its profits with the Arab countries; 63 percent of the Arab share would go to Saudi Arabia, 11.5 percent to Lebanon for the use of the terminal installations at Sidon, and the remaining 25.5 percent would be divided between Syria, Jordan and Lebanon in proportion to the length of the pipeline in each country. EIU/QERS, 31 October 1957: 3.

⁹⁸ *MEED*, 3 November 1961: 487.

⁹⁹ EIU/QERS, 30 April 1962: 6.

¹⁰⁰ BBC/SWB, Weekly Economic Supplement, No. W137, 30 November 1961.

¹⁰¹ As stipulated in the agreement, the sum of \$10 million or (exactly \$10,246,665) was paid to the Syrian treasury within ten days after the ratification of the agreement by the Syrian Assembly. See BBC/SWB, Weekly Economic Supplement, No. W151, 8 March 1962; *MEED*, 23 March 1962: 141; EIU/QERS, 30 April 1962: 7.

attached'.¹⁰² Subsequently, Syrian credit requests found sympathetic ears in the Western capitals which showed their appreciation of Syria's return to liberal economic policies based on the primacy of the private sector by agreeing to provide \$41.6 million in the form of a multilateral loan under the auspices of the IMF: the IMF provided \$6.6 million, West Germany \$16 million, Italy \$5 million, and the USA \$14 million.¹⁰³

With these international loans bolstering foreign exchange reserves and prospects of promising export earnings from forthcoming harvests, the Ministry of Economy took significant steps to liberalise the foreign exchange regime that had been in force since February 1961. Under a decree issued on 10 July 1962, foreign currency deals at the free exchange rates were allowed; import of foreign currency and Syrian banknotes were permitted without any restriction; transfers of foreign currency outside the country were also allowed for residents and non-residents provided that they conformed to the rules laid down by the Exchange Control Office; and finally, the repatriation of foreign capital and profits of residents and non-residents was permitted provided that such capital entered the country through authorised banks after 10 July.¹⁰⁴ On 26 July, the Ministry of Economy lifted all restrictions on non-resident and frozen accounts belonging to citizens of Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Yemen, Aden, Persian Gulf shaykhdoms, Iran, Turkey and Cyprus. It also authorised banks in Syria to accept deposits in foreign currency from non-residents provided that banks make monthly returns of such deposits to the Exchange Control Office.¹⁰⁵

These extensive liberalisation measures were then followed by a 6.3 percent devaluation of the Syrian currency, changing the dollar parity from SL3.585 to SL3.820. According to the Deputy Governor of the Syrian Central Bank, the reason for the devaluation was to bring the official exchange rate into line with its free market value and the export and import rates of neighbouring countries as well as making Syrian industrial and agricultural products more competitive in world markets.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² BBC/SWB, No. 841, 11 January 1962.

¹⁰³ *ESE*, 1962: 25; *MEED*, 16 March 1962: 129; EIU/QERS, 6 August 1962: 5.

¹⁰⁴ Ministerial Decree No. 391 of 10 July 1962 as reported in *ESE*, 1962: 17; BBC/SWB, Weekly Economic Supplement, No. W170, 19 July 1962.

¹⁰⁵ *Middle East Journal*, 'Chronology', 1962, p. 502.

¹⁰⁶ *ESE*, 1962, pp. 17-18; *MEED*, 3 August 1962, p. 359.

Liberalisation in the foreign exchange regime and devaluation were accompanied by increases of 1-1.5 percent in the credit and discount rates of the Central Bank following the recommendations of the IMF in a move to encourage savings and help stabilise the Syrian currency.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, the Separatist regime's economic liberalisation measures and macroeconomic policies coincided with typical IMF stabilisation programmes which advocate the privatisation of state-owned enterprises, export promotion measures, liberalisation of foreign exchange regimes and removal of restrictions on capital movements. Despite the absence of a formal stand-by agreement with the IMF, the implementation of these measures and policies, which without doubt also reflected the preferences of the regime, and the facilitation of their implementation by the IMF, the US and West European states such as West Germany and Italy corroborate fitting appraisals of the Separatist regime's international direction best captured by the title of a report by *New York Times*' Middle East correspondent: 'Regime in Syria is Leaning to West'.¹⁰⁸

The fact that the leaders of the Separatist regime asked for and received financial assistance from the institutions and states of the Western bloc played a substantial part in sustaining their perception as pro-West despite statements that their international policy was based on the principle of neutrality and non-alignment.¹⁰⁹

6.5.6. Testing Waters in Moscow

Despite their conservative tendencies, pro-Western leanings and their decision to keep the ban imposed during the union on the activities of local Communists, the early leaders of the Separatist regime sought Moscow's support too, since they could hardly do without the latter's economic and technical assistance. Moreover, by dealing with the Soviet Union they would be in a position to demonstrate to their opponents that Syria's separation from Egypt did not entail dependence on the 'imperialists'.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, in contrast to the success of the economic missions sent to Bonn, Rome and Washington

¹⁰⁷ EIU/QERS, 6 August 1962, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ Dana Adams Schmidt, 'Regime in Syria Leaning to West,' *New York Times*, 16 October 1961 as quoted in Heydemann, 1999, p. 143, footnote 22. For a similar observation, see Tütsch, 1964, p. 87.

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, 'Prime Minister Dawalibi's Statement of Policy', in BBC/SWB, No. 841, 11 January 1962; 'Report of Prime Minister Dawalibi's 29 January 1962 Press Conference', in BBC/SWB, No. 858, 31 January 1962; 'Foreign Minister As'ad Mahasin's Statement of 22 September 1962', in BBC/SWB, No. 1056, 25 September 1962.

¹¹⁰ From day one, President Nasser had called Syria's split from Egypt as the work of a separatist, reactionary and imperialist movement working for colonialism. See BBC/SWB, No. 757, 2 October 1961.

in securing the much needed financial assistance, the missions sent to Moscow and Prague in February and March 1962 by the Dawalibi government failed to show any tangible achievements. Although the Minister of Defence and Education Rashid Barmada who led the Syrian delegation which also included the Deputy Governor of the Central Bank, the Director of the Railways Administration and officials of the Ministry of Economy, expressed his satisfaction over the talks with Soviet officials on the issue of economic and cultural co-operation, the Soviets did not offer more than confirmation of their previous commitments, an indication of their dismay with the conservative leanings and policies of the first three post-separation governments.¹¹¹

In September, when a principal architect of the 1957 Syrian-Soviet economic co-operation agreement Khalid al-'Azm became prime minister once again, anticipation of closer relations between Syria and Socialist countries was expressed through congratulatory messages sent by Khrushchev, Janos Kadar and Zhou Enlai, the leaders of the Soviet Union, Hungary and China respectively, none of whom had made such a gesture to any of the previous prime ministers of the Separatist regime.¹¹² Consequently, the 'Azm government tried to capitalise on this warm welcome in its search for foreign economic and technical assistance it deemed necessary for the implementation of Syria's vital economic development projects. At the same time, it also endeavoured to obtain long-term development credits from West European states and the US which had already provided the funds to its predecessors in their quest to overcome foreign currency shortages.

6.5.7. The Separatist Regime and Economic Development

While the task of obtaining long-term development credits fell on the shoulders of the 'Azm government, its predecessors had prepared a platform for their successor to act from by forming committees, creating institutions, awarding contracts and sending delegations abroad. The governments of Izzat al-Nuss and Kuzbari, for example, had formed a committee to review economic legislation, including the economic development plan introduced during the union. Moreover, during their rather short reign, a public institution called the General Authority for the Euphrates Project was formed and put in charge of all irrigation and power projects based on the Euphrates and

¹¹¹ BBC/SWB, No. 893, 13 March 1962.

¹¹² BBC/SWB, No. 1054, 22 September 1962; *Mizan*, October 1962: 18.

its tributaries.¹¹³ This authority was also entrusted to re-negotiate the DM500 million-agreement with West Germany concluded before Syria's withdrawal from the UAR. The West German government had confirmed its commitment in principle following the break up of the union but also had raised its concerns over the ability of the Syrian economy to stand the strain of financing the internal costs of the project and the question of the division of the waters of the Euphrates between Syria, Iraq and Turkey.¹¹⁴ The elimination of these concerns became a major task for the successive governments of the Separatist regime. Hence, by initiating the policy of *rapprochement* with Iraq, the governments of Kuzbari and al-Nuss facilitated the removal of a potential obstacle to the implementation of the Euphrates scheme. The subsequent Dawalibi government, on the other hand, sent a delegation to Bonn to re-negotiate the credit agreement and also contracted a West German and a Swedish firm to design the dam proper and the power plant, preliminary steps towards the implementation of the scheme.¹¹⁵ Moreover, in April 1962, Dutch experts started to work on irrigation needs in the Euphrates basin.¹¹⁶

While the studies on the Euphrates project were taking place, the government of Bashir al-'Azma concluded the promised review of the first five-year economic development plan that had been prepared by the union authorities and submitted the development budget for July 1962-December 1963 which assigned SL61 million to the Euphrates and Khabour projects to the President for approval. This July 1962-December 1963 development budget was approved and promulgated, together with the ordinary budget and the budgets for the autonomous administrations for the same period, by President Qudsi only a week before the replacement of the 'Azma government.¹¹⁷ Accordingly, development expenditures were set at SL622 million and ordinary budget expenditures of the central government at SL943 million. The 'Azma government adopted this budget without any changes. However, as observers stated, expenditure levels could be

¹¹³ Nureddin Kahhalah, a former UAR Vice-President, was appointed as president to the new organisation. *MEED*, 8 December 1961: 547.

¹¹⁴ These concerns were conveyed to Syrian officials during the visit of a three-man West German delegation to Syria at the end of October 1961. See *MEED*, 3 November 1961: 487. For general studies on West German aid, see White, 1965; Knusel, 1968.

¹¹⁵ *MEED*, 2 March 1962: 547; EIU/QERS, 30 April 1962: 7.

¹¹⁶ 'Précis of the Briefing by the President of the General Authority for the Euphrates Project, Nureddin Kahhalah', in BBC/SWB, No. 1057, 26 September 1962.

¹¹⁷ Legislative Decree No. 132 of 11 September 1962 is reproduced in *ESE*, 1962: Annex 66. For a breakdown of the estimated ordinary budget revenues and expenditures of the central government, see Tables 10 and 11 in the Appendix.

maintained at the planned level if foreign loans could be obtained.¹¹⁸ And this became one of the main objectives of the 'Azm government during its reign since even the slightly reduced development budget required SL222 million over eighteen months in foreign loans for the public sector to fulfil its obligations.

6.5.8. Foreign Aid: Yes to West, Yea to East

From its inception until it was ousted from power by a military coup, the government of 'Azm strove to secure long-term foreign credits to meet foreign currency requirements of the development plan. Within a six-month period, delegations were sent not only to West European capitals and to Washington but also to the capitals of the East European states, to Moscow and to as far as even Peking. This policy of seeking foreign credits from almost any quarter was defended in a speech by the Prime Minister who aimed at pre-empting any potential criticism, either from leftists or from conservatives within Syria. He also wanted to avert the concerns of those in Western capitals who equated dealing with Communist states of the East as the beginning of the process of becoming one of them or one of their satellites. However, since lenders or donors of foreign credits were not members of a benevolent society engaged in charity work and aid was not provided simply for altruistic reasons, a sense of gratitude to lenders was also included in the speech in order to attract foreign aid. Thus, after underlining his government's resolve to carry out Syria's development projects, 'Azm continued:¹¹⁹

I wish to tell you frankly that the projects for whose implementation we obtain foreign credit facilities are Syrian projects, and will always remain Syrian projects. As long as we do not agree to any political conditions in order to obtain economic aid and credit facilities, we do not care whether we obtain the aid and facilities from States of East or West. All we care about is to carry out our development projects through the best technical and financial conditions which we can obtain. The colour of every project we establish has our country's colour, not the colour of those who extend aid and credit facilities to establish it. ... A glance around us will show us that ... there have also been several development projects in India, some with aid from the East and others with aid from the West. But these projects remained Indian, and India has preserved its independence, sovereignty, system of government and its non-aligned neutral policy. I do not want anyone to think that we, in principle, prefer one foreign state to another in contracting aid and credit facilities to carry out our economic projects. ... Let every Government which wishes to co-operate sincerely and honestly with us to carry out our development projects rest assured that Syria – in addition to its

¹¹⁸ EIU/QERS, 31 October 1961: 4.

¹¹⁹ 'Azm's Speech of 21 December 1962 as reproduced in BBC/SWB, No. 1133, 27 December 1962.

ability to fulfil its commitments and to honour its signature – knows how to express thanks for every hand which extends aid.

In its efforts to carry out Syrian development projects, the 'Azm government re-contracted the Czechoslovak firm Technoexport, which had successfully completed the Homs refinery, for the expansion of the Homs-Hamah power station and its branches for the nitrate fertiliser factory at the end of October.¹²⁰ Moreover, in December 1962, 'Azm announced that a preliminary agreement for new credit facilities had been reached with Czechoslovakia.¹²¹ At the beginning of 1963, the Czechoslovak firm started the expansion work which involved the installation of two 15,000-kw units, and keeping to its reputation, completed the job at the end of 1964.¹²²

Poland became the second East European country which responded to Syrian appeals for economic assistance by sending a delegation to Damascus on 2 November 1962.¹²³ Following a week of talks, the Syrian side secured a Polish pledge to finance a number of industrial projects in Syria by means of a loan of up to \$15 million. Further consultations brought about, on 20 December 1962, the first Syrian-Polish economic and technical co-operation agreement which set the long-term objectives of co-operation. It also provided for the formation of a joint commission to prepare prepositions to develop technical co-operation and expand bilateral trade as well as discussing and solving the problems that might have arisen during the implementation of agreements and protocols between the two sides. An executive protocol to the agreement delineated areas of co-operation and included the list of the projects that were to be undertaken with Polish financial and technical assistance and set the terms for such an assistance. Accordingly the \$15 million loan was to be used for the purchase of industrial equipment for a phosphates fertiliser factory, a citric acid factory, and an electrical machinery factory, as well as agricultural machinery and mining equipment. It was to cover the cost of 70 percent of this equipment, was to be drawn over two years in four instalments, carried 2.5 percent interest and was repayable over eight years.¹²⁴ Syrian-Polish bilateral trade too benefited from these financial and technical co-operation arrangements and sustained the relatively high level of a total of more than

¹²⁰ BBC/SWB, Weekly Economic Supplement, No. W186, 8 November 1962.

¹²¹ BBC/SWB, No. 1133, 27 December 1962.

¹²² The inauguration ceremony took place on 27 April 1965 and was attended by the Syrian President of the period, Amin al-Hafiz. *Rapport 1964-1965*: A71.

¹²³ BBC/SWB, Weekly Economic Supplement, No. W186, 8 November 1962.

¹²⁴ *ESE*, 1962: 25; *EIU/QERS*, 12 February 1963: 3; *Rapport 1968-1969*: A105-106.

SL30 million it reached in 1962 while the average for the previous three years had been around SL5 million and negligible before then.¹²⁵

While the Soviet Union's disinclination to pledge new commitments to Syria under the Separatist regime continued, China, which was having a rift with the Soviet Union at the time,¹²⁶ stepped in and offered technical as well as financial aid. The offer was directly communicated to Prime Minister 'Azm by the Chinese ambassador in Damascus who also invited a Syrian delegation to China to draft an agreement.¹²⁷ Subsequently, a Syrian delegation headed by Minister of Communication Subhi Kahhalah travelled to Moscow and Peking on one continues trip possibly to demonstrate Syrian neutrality in the Sino-Soviet rift. While the delegation had to contend with Soviet pledges to speed up the delivery of machinery and equipment for the construction of the Latakia-Kamishli railway in Moscow,¹²⁸ the talks in Peking proved to be more fruitful. Initially, Chinese officials pledged an interest free loan amounting to 35,000,000 French francs repayable in ten annual instalments starting from 1970 but following the request of 'Azm, the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai was reported to have agreed to double the amount of the loan to FF70,000,000 (\$16 million) and to the deferment of the first repayment on the loan to 1976.¹²⁹ Besides an agreement to this effect, a trade and payment agreement was also signed on 21 February 1963.¹³⁰ The payment agreement remained in effect until the conclusion of another trade agreement on 16 March 1982 which included a protocol that annulled it.¹³¹

In the light of China's rather strained resources at the time, the terms of the Chinese loan were very generous and reflected China's attitude toward aid and foreign trade. As Madelyn Ross maintains, 'trade and aid became tools China actively used to win friends and counter Soviet influence in the World.'¹³² Hence it is not a surprise that Syrian exports to China which had totalled SL8 million in 1960, SL43 million in 1961 and SL15 million in 1962, leaped, after the conclusion of Sino-Syrian agreements at the end

¹²⁵ See Tables 3 and 4 on Direction of Trade, 1958-1963 and 1954-1957.

¹²⁶ For the Sino-Soviet Dispute see Goldstein, 1995: 224-265.

¹²⁷ BBC/SWB, No. 1116, 4 December 1962.

¹²⁸ *ESE*, 1962: 25-26.

¹²⁹ BBC/SWB, Weekly Economic Supplement, No. W199, 14 February 1963; *ESE*, 1963: 46.

¹³⁰ BBC/SWB, Weekly Economic Supplement, No. W199, 14 February 1963.

¹³¹ Law No. 23 of 28. 11.1983 Ratifying the Syrian-Chinese long-term trade agreement and the protocol annulling the payment agreement, signed in Damascus on 16.3.1982, as reproduced in *Rapport 1982-1983*: C84-C90.

¹³² Ross, 1995: 435.

of 1962, to SL76 million in 1963 and SL108 million in 1964 representing over 10 and 16 percent of all registered Syrian exports respectively.¹³³

The United States which had been helping out the UAR in tackling its balance of trade difficulties by providing surplus wheat both to Egypt and Syria under concessionary terms, carried on with this policy until the 1962 harvest put Syria back on the list of cereal exporting countries.¹³⁴ Following the summer harvest, the American Administration responded to Syrian appeals for financial assistance this time to be used for the implementation of development projects. In September 1962, an agreement was signed between the Syrian government and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) under which the latter undertook to extend a loan of \$14.7 million in foreign exchange to contribute towards the construction costs of eleven grain silos with a total capacity of 325,000 tons. The loan was repayable over 40 years and carried an interest rate of 0.75 percent. The total cost of the silos was estimated at \$21.7 million and the USAID also agreed to lend the remaining \$7 million in local currency which was derived from sales of agricultural produce. However, this loan was repayable in 34 years and carried a higher interest rate of 4 percent.¹³⁵ The granting of these loans prompted Deputy-Prime Minister 'Azma to announce that the US had changed its Middle East policy and that it was co-operating with liberation movements.¹³⁶

France which traditionally had strong ties with Syria got also involved in Syrian development activity following the announcement of the decision for the restoration of diplomatic relations on 8 September 1962.¹³⁷ Syrian-French relations had been strained over the question of compensation for the nationalisation of former French firms in Syria and had suffered a huge setback when Syria and all other Arab states except Lebanon had broken off diplomatic relations with France in solidarity with Egypt during the Suez crisis. The break had later been maintained as a protest against French policy in Algeria but after the latter's independence in 1962, the resumption of

¹³³ See Table 3.

¹³⁴ The first direct Syrian-American agreement for deliveries of surplus American wheat, flour and rice was signed in Damascus on 9 November 1961 and provided for the supply to Syria of 100,000 tons of wheat, flour and rice worth SL7 million. *MEED*, 17 November 1961: 512; *ESE*, 1964: 248.

¹³⁵ *ESE*, 1962: 22; BBC/SWB, Weekly Economic Supplement, No. W193, 3 January 1963; EIU/QERS, 12 February 1963: 3.

¹³⁶ The announcement was made in the wake of 'Azma's return from the USA as head of the Syrian delegation to the UN. *Middle East Journal*, 'Chronology', 1963: 136.

¹³⁷ *MEED*, 14 September 1962: 398.

diplomatic relations between Syria and France opened the way for French participation in Syrian development project.¹³⁸ In November, following the visit to France of a Syrian delegation led by Minister of Public Works Robert Elias, it was announced that France had agreed to lend Syria \$50 million to finance the development projects including the construction of an international airport in Damascus; of an electricity network connecting the towns of Damascus, Homs, Hamah and Aleppo; and of an irrigation project which entailed the building of a dam on the Barada River and the diversion of surplus water to irrigate 11,000 hectares.¹³⁹ It was also reported that France had agreed to join West Germany in financing the Euphrates project by building a power plant.¹⁴⁰ However, the task of getting West Germany to reaffirm its commitment to the financing of Syria's largest development project laid ahead of the 'Azm government, a task it undertook in earnest.

6.5.9. West German Aid for Euphrates Project: Reality or Illusion?

Following the establishment of the new cabinet, a Syrian delegation including the Governor of the Syrian Central Bank, the President of the General Authority for the Euphrates Project and the Minister of Economy conducted negotiations with the representatives of the West German government in Bonn. These negotiations proved to be inconclusive despite the Syrian delegation's assurances which directly addressed the West German government's concerns over Syrian economy's ability to pay for the local costs of the project during the implementation stage and to repay the negotiated loan in foreign currency after the completion of the project.¹⁴¹ Following the return of the Syrian delegation to Damascus, it emerged that the West German government had refused to endorse the DM500 million credit promised in 1961 when Syria was still part of the UAR and instead had proposed a credit of DM300-350 million provided that the Syrian side agreed to the scaling down of the project.¹⁴² In response, Prime Minister 'Azm rejected scaling down of the project and announced the formation of a committee with himself as chairman and the Ministers of Finance, Communications and Economy and the President of the General Authority for the Euphrates Project as members to study alternative means of finance and to oversee the preparations for the project.

¹³⁸ For a general study on the characteristics of French aid, see Hayter, 1966.

¹³⁹ BBC/SWB, Weekly Economic Supplement, No. W189, 29 November 1962; *ESE*, 1962: 26.

¹⁴⁰ BBC/SWB, Weekly Economic Supplement, No. W189, 29 November 1962; EIU/QERS, 12 February 1963: 3.

¹⁴¹ *ESE*, 1962: 24; *MEED*, 28 September 1962: 430 and 19 October 1962: 465.

¹⁴² *MEED*, 19 October 1962, p. 465; EIU/QERS, 31 October 1961, p. 4.

Moreover, the Prime Minister publicly stated that they had requested a rapid and final answer from the West German government.¹⁴³ This request for a rapid and final answer can be interpreted almost as an ultimatum. Meanwhile, the Syrian government attempted to use the leverage it had over the West German government: it hinted that Bonn's refusal could adversely affect oil concession negotiations with the West German firm Concordia.¹⁴⁴ As part of a carrot and stick policy, it had already announced in October its decision, in principle, to grant the oil concession for Suweidiya oil fields to the West German firm and its American associates.¹⁴⁵ It also took further steps to obtain its neighbours' consent for the project and organised a mission to Turkey for talks regarding the sharing of the waters of Euphrates¹⁴⁶ while agreement with Iraq on the issue was reported.¹⁴⁷ Subsequently, the efforts of al-'Azm government bore the much worked for result and the protracted negotiations for a loan to finance the Euphrates project were brought to a successful conclusion in January 1963 following three-day talks with a West German delegation. The agreement in principle was announced through a joint communiqué issued on 14 January in Damascus and pointed to a compromise solution: the Syrian government accepted the scaling down of the project and the West German government waived its objection to third party, presumably French, participation.¹⁴⁸

The actual agreement was, on the other hand, concluded on 5 February 1963 in Bonn after further talks and further modifications to the terms of the negotiated loan which brought down the interest rate it was to carry by half a percentage point to 3.25 percent.¹⁴⁹ The agreement was without doubt more than a commercial transaction and its introduction definitely supported this view since co-operation for Syrian economic

¹⁴³ BBC/SWB, No. 1099, 14 November 1962.

¹⁴⁴ It was also believed in Syria that the West German government was procrastinating in loan agreement negotiations to put pressure on the Syrian government so that the latter would grant oil exploitation rights to Concordia and its associates. The talks with Concordia took place in Damascus in the first week of October 1962 and coincided with the Syrian-German negotiations for a long-term credit agreement to carry out the Euphrates project. A preliminary concession agreement was signed in March 1963 only after Bonn agreed to revive its long-term credit pledge in February 1963. See *MEED*, 12 October 1962: 453; Lenczowski, 1972: 120; Hawrani, 2000, 4: 3133.

¹⁴⁵ Hammadi, 1979: 487-490.

¹⁴⁶ On 1 December 1962, Kahhalah announced that he would lead a five-member delegation to Turkey for a 10-day visit at the invitation of the Turkish government. BBC/SWB, No. 1116, 4 December 1962.

¹⁴⁷ In October, it was reported that Iraq and Syria had reached an agreement on their future shares of the waters of the Euphrates and on their respective plans for the development of the river basin. *MEED*, 19 October 1962: 465.

¹⁴⁸ Excerpts of the joint communiqué is reproduced in BBC/SWB, No. 1150, 16 January 1962.

¹⁴⁹ The text of the agreement is reproduced in *Rapport 1963-1964*: 250-252.

development was presented as a way to ‘reaffirm and develop their traditionally friendly relations.’ Accordingly, the West German government committed itself to providing a loan of DM350 million (\$88 million) to be repaid in hard currency in twenty years to cover the foreign exchange cost of the first stage of the Euphrates project which consisted of a dam and reservoir with a water level of 300 meters to be designed in such a way that it could be further raised during subsequent stages; a power station of an initial capacity of 200,000-kw; high-tension lines to connect the power station with the consumption centres; a canal network to irrigate an area of 200,000 hectares. Moreover, the two sides agreed to undertake of a final round of studies on the project whose cost was partly to be met an advance payment by the West German Bank.¹⁵⁰ Finally, in an attempt to strengthen the ties between them, the two sides also agreed to hold talks on further economic and technical collaboration; on encouragement of investment; on measures to avoid double taxation; and on maritime navigation.¹⁵¹ The conclusion in of the credit agreement with West Germany was described in Syria as the major economic event of 1963 and hailed not only as an economic success but also a political triumph.¹⁵²

Yet the agreement with West Germany for the implementation of the Euphrates Dam project proved to be an illusion. The Ba’thists, who took the reigns of power after the 8 March 1963 coup that overthrew the Separatist regime, attempted to renegotiate the agreement and reached an accord in October 1964. Nevertheless, the deterioration of Arab-West German relations following the revelations of free arms deliveries by West Germany to Israel,¹⁵³ put an effective end to West German interest in the Euphrates project in 1965. Subsequently, the Soviet Union was approached once again and a protocol of co-operation for the construction of a dam that would double the acreage of irrigated land and a power plant that would quadruple the output of electricity was concluded on 22 April 1966.¹⁵⁴

The implementation of the Euphrates project proceeded promptly after the conclusion of the Syrian-Soviet protocol and the formal inauguration took place in March 1968

¹⁵⁰ The amount to be advanced was set at DM20 million by a subsequent agreement. *Rapport 1963-1964*: 55; *ESE*, 1963: 38.

¹⁵¹ In line with this provision, an agreement according to which West Germany agreed to extend technical aid to Syria was signed in Damascus in July 1963. The text of this agreement is reproduced in *Rapport 1963-1964*: 253-256.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*: 54.

¹⁵³ Colombe, 1965 ; “La Crise Germano-Arabe á Travers Les Textes”, 1965: 311-345.

¹⁵⁴ *Rapport 1965-66*: A43-A52.

although the flow of equipment for the project had started nearly a year earlier. The first and the second stages of the project were completed in July 1973 and March 1978 respectively. Soon after the ceremony that marked the end of the second and final phase of the project, the Dam complex started to supply 90 percent of Syria's electricity needs making Syria a net exporter of energy but fulfilling the aim of doubling the country's irrigated land area had to be put off for a generation mainly due to the unforeseen problems of salinity and high gypsum levels in the soil of the Euphrates basin.

Apart from the Euphrates project, the Ba'thist regime's quest for external resources in its early years enabled it to set in train or carry on the execution of the following infrastructural, industrial or agricultural projects: the Kamishli-Latakia railway (Soviet-Bulgarian)¹⁵⁵; the Ghab land reclamation, irrigation and electrification scheme (various);¹⁵⁶ the Karatchuk-Tartus oil pipeline (Italian); the expansion of the Homs refinery and a new power plant (Czechoslovak);¹⁵⁷ a fertiliser plant at Homs (Soviet-Czechoslovak-Italian); an iron-steel mill at Hamah and a battery plant (Polish);¹⁵⁸ a gas cylinders factory and an electrical equipment plant (Hungarian);¹⁵⁹ a cotton spinning mill at Hamah (Chinese);¹⁶⁰ cement plants, a brick factory, flour-mills, a sulphuric acid factory (East German);¹⁶¹ the Homs-Palmyra railway, a factory for electricity generators, brick factories, a citric acid plant, a grape-pressing plant, abattoirs, cow and sheep breeding stations (Bulgarian);¹⁶² the Homs-Damascus road and the expansion of ports of Latakia and Tartus (mainly Yugoslav);¹⁶³ a new international airport in Damascus, an intercity electricity network and a tractor factory (French). Moreover, the development of oil reserves (mainly Soviet) and of phosphates deposits at Tadmour near Palmyra in the Syrian desert (Polish and Bulgarian) paved the way for the beginning of the export of these commodities in 1968 and 1971 respectively.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁵ Bulgarian involvement started in September 1966 with the award of a SL80-100 million contract to the Bulgarian TECHNOIMPEX. *ARR*, 1-15 September 1966 and *Rapport 1971-72*: A104.

¹⁵⁶ Launched in early 1950s, the global cost of the project was estimated at SL240 million. Of these amount SL108 million was spent in 1963-1969. *All About the Projects of Development in Syria*, 1971: 33.

¹⁵⁷ *ARR*, 16-31 December 1966: 295.

¹⁵⁸ *ARR*, 16-30 November 1966: 262; *Rapport 1971-72*: A56.

¹⁵⁹ *Rapport 1968-69*: 7-8.

¹⁶⁰ *ARR*, 1-15 March 1971: 146.

¹⁶¹ *Rapport 1965-66*: 3 and *Rapport 1969-70*: 11.

¹⁶² *Rapport 1969-70*: 12.

¹⁶³ *ARR*, 1-15 April 1968: 95 and 1-15 April 1969: 148.

¹⁶⁴ Following modest amounts, the increases in production and world prices took Syria's phosphate export earnings to \$15 million in 1975. Besides, phosphates production contributed significantly to the growth of a chemical industry in Syria. Kanovsky, 1986: 288-289.

The initiation and simultaneous progression of an impressive combination of development projects with a potentially massive impact on the resource base of the state by the radical wing of the Ba'th helped prepare the ground for the consolidation of the regime and the state under Hafez al-Asad who presided upon Syria until his death on 10 June 2000.¹⁶⁵

6.5.10. The Separatist Regime: Success or Failure?

With the securing of the West German loan, the amount of long-term foreign development loans arranged by the 'Azm government during the 171 days that passed from its formation until its demise totalled more than \$190 million. This rather impressive amount or its equivalent in local currency, together with the Soviet commitments made under the 1960 September protocol was more than enough to cover foreign loan requirements of the first-five year plan which had been estimated at SL640 million (\$180 million before the devaluation of 1962). Hence, following the combined success of the first five governments of the Separatist regime in obtaining the desperately needed foreign exchange to see the country through until the start of the inflow of export revenues from the bumper 1962 harvest, the last government of the Separatist period which was led by Khalid al-'Azm succeeded in securing long-term foreign loans required to meet the foreign exchange requirements of the development plan.

However, since these loans were obtained towards the end of the separatist period, they did not have a considerable impact on the implementation of the development plan during the same period and actual public development spending fell short of planned spending. For instance, during the second year of the 1960/61-1964/65 development plan only SL55 million out of the required SL115 million was obtained in foreign loans and credit facilities. Moreover, only SL168 million out of the required SL268 million was extracted from local sources and the contribution of Egypt, not unexpectedly, had been limited to SL2.6 million instead of the planned SL45 million. Therefore, only

¹⁶⁵ This is not to overlook that Asad also relied on the loyalty of the army and his repressive security apparatus, the backing of the Ba'th Party which mobilised a largely rural base of support, and the co-optation of a regime-dependent urban bourgeoisie. But as Hinnebusch argues, 'crucial to Asad's consolidation of the regime was rent – oil revenues and aid from Arab oil states – that allowed him to service clientele networks within and alongside state institutions and helped fund construction of a huge national security state buttressed by Soviet arms'. Hinnebusch, 2005a: 84.

about half of the 1961-1962 development budget or SL226.6 million out of the planned SL438.2 million had been spent during the second year of the plan.¹⁶⁶ While the public sector struggled to fulfil its economic development obligations, the private sector thrived in the post-union liberal economic atmosphere. Its contribution to gross fixed capital formation in 1962 hit a record high and reached SL456.1 million, about 68 percent increase over the previous year. With public sector's contribution falling by SL22.2 million to SL173.1 million, gross fixed capital formation in 1962 totalled SL629.2 million, an increase of SL163 million over 1961.¹⁶⁷ The ratio of gross fixed capital investment to gross domestic product which had averaged about 14 percent during the 1950-1961 period equalled 1951's record high 16 percent in 1962.¹⁶⁸ The end of drought years and high levels of investment stimulated economic growth during the separatist period. The gross domestic product which had fallen below its 1956 level of SL3,066 million during the three years between 1958 and 1960 showed signs of recovery in 1961 as it reached SL3,219 million. In 1962, it experienced a spectacular increase of about 24 percent as it reached SL3,983 million.¹⁶⁹ This outstanding growth rate was accompanied by a fall in the cost-of-living index making it more remarkable.¹⁷⁰ Increased economic activity was not confined to the agricultural sector which without doubt was having a brisk year due to bumper harvest but there is supportive evidence of increased industrial activity too. The index number of major mechanised industries in Syria (1956=100) had an illustrious rise of 20 points in 1962 alone compared to an increase of only 23 points in the four years between 1958 and 1961.¹⁷¹

On the other hand, exports of industrial products fell by some 30 percent in 1962 compared with 1961. They had reached their peak values in 1960 but dropped significantly following the end of the union since Egypt, which had become the principle Arab customer for Syrian industrial products, ceased its purchases after Syrian

¹⁶⁶ This trend continued following the promulgation of the eighteen-month 1962-1963 development budget as only 46.2 percent of the planned SL622 million had been spent at the end of this stage. *La Planification Économique et Social en R.A.S. 1960-1970*, n.d.: 45-46.

¹⁶⁷ The figures are in 1956 constant prices. *SSA*, 1964: 388.

¹⁶⁸ This elevated ratio was not to be surpassed until 1969. See Kanovsky, 1977, Table 3: 12-13. For gross fixed capital formation figures in the 1970s, see Lavy and Sheffer, 1991, Table 1.3: 12.

¹⁶⁹ The figures are in 1963 constant prices. *SSA*, 1971: 472-473.

¹⁷⁰ Wholesale price index (1963=100) which had risen to 109.1 in 1961 from 107 in 1960 fell to 101 in 1962. Consumer price index fell from 102 in 1961 to 98 in 1962. IMF, 1972 Supplement: 222-223.

¹⁷¹ The index numbers for the years starting from 1958 until 1963 were 124, 125, 143, 147, 167 and 173 respectively. *SSA*, 1971: 252.

withdrawal from the UAR.¹⁷² Despite the fall in the export of industrial products, a substantial reduction in the trade deficit was achieved in 1962. Aided by the resumption of cereal exports¹⁷³ as well as the devaluation of the Syrian currency, as Table 3 on direction of trade indicates, the 1962 export figures constituted a record at SL617 million and showed an increase of over 55 percent over the previous year. Exports to West European countries and the United States recovered to their pre-union 1957 levels and constituted 37.6 percent of all registered exports while West Germany became Syria's main trading partner for the first time since Syria's independence providing 11.3 percent of all Syrian imports and purchasing 6.7 percent of Syrian exports. Although Lebanon regained its pre-union position as the main outlet for Syrian exports and despite the nominal increase in the total value of exports to Arab countries from SL136 million to SL171 million, the share of Arab countries in Syrian exports fell from 34.5 percent in 1961 to 27.8 percent in 1962. In contrast, Eastern Bloc countries increased their share from 14 to 20.9 percent as they bought substantial quantities of Syrian cotton; together with China, Eastern bloc countries purchased 49.6 percent of all Syrian cotton exports and provided 50.8 percent of Syria's earnings from cotton exports or SL132 million in 1962.¹⁷⁴ Although imports rose from SL711 million in 1961 to SL862 million in 1962, the trade deficit fell by SL72 million to SL245 million (\$64 million); the trade deficit with the West European countries and the USA amounted to SL261 million and was partially offset by surpluses from trade with Socialist and Arab countries. On the other hand, the current account, which had had a cumulative deficit of SL541 million (\$151 million) during the 1858-1961 four-year period, was balanced in 1962. The royalties and expenses of oil companies, having been boosted by Tapline's \$10 million payment, amounted to SL182 million in 1962 and played a critical role in covering the trade deficit.¹⁷⁵

However, despite all these indicators of economic accomplishments, the coalition which formed the backbone of the regime crumbled from within. As 'Azm maintained in his

¹⁷² EIU/QERS, 13 May 1963: 6.

¹⁷³ As Table 10 illustrates, of the three main crops, 211,594 tons of wheat valued at SL74 million and 390,411 tons of barley valued at SL75 million were exported while the export of 113,406 tons of cotton brought in the equivalent of SL260 million in foreign currency in 1962. The total value of these three main crops constituted 66.2 percent of all exports in 1962.

¹⁷⁴ In 1961, Eastern Bloc countries and China received 43.23 percent of all Syrian cotton exports and provided 43.16 percent of Syrian cotton export revenues. These figures show that these countries were paying world market prices for Syrian goods. *ESE*, 1963: 113.

¹⁷⁵ *SSA*, 1964: 390.

memoirs, the problems facing his government started from the day he was asked to form the government, continued and increased day by day.¹⁷⁶ The rivalry between the President and the Prime Minister, the animosity between the adherents of the Muslim Brotherhood and followers of Hawrani which at times took violent forms and the resignation of their members from the government, the discord between the civilian politicians who supported the democratisation measures and the military officers who regarded them as an attempt to curb their influence and the division of the Syrian Military Command over proposed transfers, dismissals and promotions of officers all contributed to the weakening of the regime. The establishment of a Ba'thist regime in Iraq following the coup d'état of 8 February 1963 acted as a catalyst. Exactly a month later on 8 March, a coalition of Ba'thist, Nasserist and independent officers overthrew what was left of the 'Azm government and brought the separatist era in Syria to a close. Subsequently, Ba'thist officers eliminated their partners in the coup d'état and helped establish a Ba'thist regime in Syria.

¹⁷⁶ 'Azm, 1973, 3: 303.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

7.1. Introduction

One of the main purposes of this study has been to examine Syria's foreign policy in the post-colonial period and contribute to the theoretical and empirical development of scholarly literature on Syria and the study of Middle East international relations and foreign policies. Another aim of this study has been to contribute to efforts towards filling the gap that still exists with respect to the foreign policies of the states of the global South. In this endeavour, Syria has been taken as a state that exhibited the basic characteristics of the global South that came to independent statehood burdened with varying degrees of underdevelopment, vulnerability, dependence and permeability. Foreign policy in a country like Syria was bound to be preoccupied with the task of overcoming these debilitating conditions or making them manageable. Thus, the socio-economic needs of the country have been presented as a source of foreign policy and the acquisition of foreign economic resources has been identified as a key foreign policy objective. Moreover, the recognition that policy makers have multiple objectives that may reinforce or undermine one another has pointed to the need to the consideration of two other main objectives alongside mobilisation of resources for economic development. These have been presented as the goals of independence/autonomy and leadership maintenance/regime consolidation. This study has contented that the interaction of these three objectives as a complex process that involves trade offs and changing priorities is worth pursuing because it provides fundamental insights into a polity's foreign policy and contributes to its understanding. On the other hand, while adopting a political economy approach as a point of departure and presenting an inside out explanation, this study does not rule out explanations that emphasise normative and material structures that operate above the state level. Instead it has drawn on Constructivist insights on the significance of shared identities and acknowledges that norms flowing from these identities can constrain state behaviour. Similarly the present study has recognised that the dynamics of balance of power politics, either at the regional or global level, were at work during the period covered by this study.

Accordingly, the way the successive regimes that ruled Syria in the pre-1963 post-colonial period dealt with the fascinating interplay of these objectives will be undertaken and empirical examples pointing to the constraining role of norms Arabism or the dynamics of balance of power politics will be given below. This final chapter concludes with a discussion of the relevance to other cases of the trio of hypotheses on the interaction of the key foreign policy objectives that has guided this study.

7.2. Summing Up and Analysis

During the Quwwatli regime that presided upon Syria in the immediate post-independence period, the goals of independence and elite maintenance reinforced each other. This stance was reflected, as discussed in Chapter Three, in the regime's uncompromising opposition to the Arab unity schemes such as the Fertile Crescent and Greater Syria Plans advanced by the Hashemite Courts in Baghdad and Amman.

On the other hand, during the Za'im regime that lasted less than five months, the goal of leadership maintenance and the goal of the acquisition of external resources mutually reinforced each other, but policies pursued, even though not fully accomplished, to obtain foreign aid for economic development were antithetical to the rhetoric of an autonomous foreign policy. As shown in Chapter Three, in his bid to prop up his shaky regime, Za'im did not hesitate to come to terms with the interests of Western oil companies that were supported by their respective governments and the neighbouring oil-rich Arab states that sought to augment their revenues. But extracting resources from the external environment to meet the requirements of economic development does not necessarily produce dependency. Indeed, once the pipelines were built, Syria's relations with the oil companies whose pipelines traversed the Syrian territory were bound to evolve in the spirit of interdependence. Another controversial move by Za'im, the ratification of the French-Syrian monetary agreement that settled the outstanding monetary issues with the former mandatory power, had an enduring value of giving Syria the freedom to exercise the right of legislating in monetary matters. The discrepancy between the general unfavourable attitude towards the monetary and the pipeline agreements at the time of their conclusion and their rather advantageous long-term effects points to the perils of any facile or deterministic theorising.

As shown in Chapter Four, Shishakli resumed what had been initiated under Za'im: social and economic reform by decree in order to consolidate his regime. Displaying a strong commitment to economic development Shishakli never abandoned the search for foreign aid, even if he moved reluctantly and put leadership maintenance first. The murder of Za'im by his opponents and charges of treason levelled against him must have played a considerable role in Shishakli's cautious approach to foreign aid that was perceived to be coming with political strings or encroaching on Syrian sovereignty.

Indeed, suspicion of foreign aid and concern about strings attached or anxiety over meddling in internal affairs transcended ideological and political boundaries during the period covered by the present study. With regard to the pre-union period, Western economic and technical assistance was predominantly perceived to have a high potential to encroach on Syrian sovereignty. Thus Point IV aid and World Bank loans were rejected because their sizes were considered insufficient and their terms were regarded as undermining traditional notions of sovereignty and hindering independent policy implementation. Moreover, Shishakli had to shelve his offer of a political settlement with Israel and the settling of Palestinian refugees in Syria as he failed to defuse intense domestic opposition to such an accord. When the goal of regime maintenance and the need for foreign resources to foster economic development appeared to be on a collusion course, the Syrian leader promptly opted for the former and published a statement that denied ongoing secret negotiations. As a result, until the formation of the UAR, Syria received no substantial Western aid that could have helped pro-West leaders consolidate their rule.

As maintained in the preceding chapters, Za'im had a flamboyant style and acted rather boldly whereas Shishakli avoided the limelight and acted cautiously. It would also appear from the preceding analysis that both Za'im and Shishakli reigned supreme and left their imprint on foreign policy making during their rule. No doubt that the fragility of the political institutions and the lack of complex bureaucratic organisations turned the making of foreign policy into a largely personal exercise during their rule. Thus this study acknowledges the importance of leadership factor as an explanatory variable but argues against its promotion as the sole determinant of state behaviour. As the discussions in the empirical chapters have shown, despite these contrasting personal traits and policy styles their policy orientations of Za'im and Shishakli were similar in

essence. Therefore, this thesis argues for the incorporation in the foreign policy analysis of the underlying conditions and causes emanating from both the internal and external settings in general and the domestic political and socio-economic imperatives in particular.

During the post-Shishakli four-year period of pluralist, multiparty parliamentary politics that was also marked by the recurrent involvement of the military, the making of foreign policy was greatly influenced by the intense clash of domestic political forces. That is not unexpected since most foreign policy decisions, akin to their counterparts in domestic politics, affect elements of a society in an uneven manner.

As manifested by the outcome of the September 1954 elections, the ascending forces were on the left of the political spectrum. However, while successful in converting their electoral advance to a crucial share in the government, in placing their supporters in the administrative machinery and in making neutralism a tenet of Syria's foreign policy, they largely failed to overcome the resistance of the conservative forces to enact fundamental reform measures and therefore consolidate their rule without the need to mobilise external resources that would have the potential to encroach on Syrian sovereignty. Thus, although increasingly contested, the capitalists and the landed elites continued to dominate Syria's domestic political economy until the union with Egypt. Their development trajectory was based on the primacy of the private sector whose resources had underwritten the rapid economic growth of the early 1950s. Although welcoming the expanding role of the state to remove the bottlenecks that inhibited further economic growth, these elites withstood pressures for an equitable distribution of income that would result from land redistribution and the reorganisation of agrarian and industrial relations of production.

Yet, although retaining their economic and social power in the pre-union period, the forces of the right were politically weakened due to their reluctance to come out against Western inspired defence schemes and were further discredited because of the involvement of a number of leading conservatives and some of their associates in plots to overthrow the government. The collusion of Britain, US and the pro-West Iraqi regime with the conspirators fuelled anti-Western sentiments while the Iraqi regime ceased to be an acceptable partner in any unity scheme.

In addition to these plots that involved Syrians and non-Syrians alike and took place in the second half of the 1950s, the penetrated characteristic of the post-colonial state and the overlapping nature of internal and external affairs have further been highlighted in this study by the discussion of the involvement of CIA's operatives in Damascus and the shadowy role of France in the encouragement and the preparation of Za'im's coup; Iraq's collusion with the conspirators that overthrew Za'im who had adopted an antagonistic stance towards neighbouring Hashemite regimes; and the contacts between Jordanian authorities and a group of Damascene officers that were involved in the September 1961 coup which put an end to the union of Syria and Egypt.

The fall of several Syrian governments because of their foreign policy stances also alludes to the intimacy of domestic affairs and foreign policy. For example, as covered in Chapter Five, the conservative government of Khury was forced to resign as it refrained from censuring Iraq when the latter declared its intention to sign a military agreement with Turkey and the Ghazzi government fell victim to public pressures after its decision to lift the ban on wheat exports to France that had been imposed in support of Algeria's struggle for independence.

The fall of these governments also illustrates that the pan-Arab norm that regulated relations with the West was at work during the period under study. Arab leaders, including Syria's, had to contend with the norms of Arabism. They had to keep alert to the possibility of censure by other Arab states or the likelihood of losing their legitimacy at home if they breached this norm of Arabism. Similarly the norm against a separate peace with Israel constrained Za'im and Shishakli although both contemplated such an undertaking. On the other hand, while there is general recognition that identity matters, the exact nature of the relationship between identity and foreign policy is still a fertile subject of theoretical debate. In this respect, this study concurs with Raymond Hinnebusch's observation that 'even when material interests drive elites' policies, they have to legitimise them in terms of the identity and norms shared with each other or their publics and this can constrain their actions: identity makes some behaviour legitimate and some illegitimate.'¹

¹ Hinnebusch, 2003b: 360.

While the interconnectedness of ‘considerations of plenty’ ‘considerations of power’ can easily be discerned in the case of Ghazzi government’s decision to lift the wheat export ban to France, it has been shown that the Baghdad Pact episode which may at the outset appear to be falling exclusively in the ‘considerations of power’ side of the classical distinction had an equally significant ‘considerations of plenty’ dimension. As discussed in Chapter Five, during the ensuing confrontation between the advocates of the Baghdad Pact and the rival bloc which included Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Syria’s left-leaning government not only committed itself to a policy of neutrality and sided with the anti-Baghdad states of the region but it also sought to derive economic benefits and get its allies shoulder part of its defence burden. Consequently, Syria signed a defence agreement with Egypt which largely remained on paper and an economic agreement with Saudi Arabia that provided an interest-free loan of \$10 million. However, the gruesome Israeli response that came in the form of a massive ‘reprisal’ attack on Syrian positions led to the assignment of the Saudi loan to the military whereas an earlier Saudi loan had helped the launching of the Latakia port project.

It is also significant that the Soviet Union declared its support to Syria and promised aid of any variety while the latter was being subjected to pressure to join the Baghdad Pact. Subsequently, in a bid to challenge the Western supremacy in the Middle East, the Soviet Union continued to extend diplomatic support, stood with Syria at times of crisis, helped break the Western arms monopoly and offered economic and technical assistance. Consequently, by the late 1950s Syria had an Eastern Bloc alternative to almost any Western proposition.

While the introduction of the Cold War to the Middle East was an undeniably enabling factor in the Syrian-Eastern Bloc co-operation, the expansion of relations was spurred by the acute need to find new markets for export surplus of Syrian agricultural products following both the contraction of the worldwide demand in the wake of the Korean war boom and the deterioration of political and economic relations with Britain and France after eruption of the Suez crisis. As discussed in Chapter Five, the Syrian government’s robust drive to find new markets for Syria’s cash crops commenced in the autumn of 1955 as that year’s cotton harvest made a record amount of cotton available for export. The subsequent conclusion of bilateral trade and payments agreements with Poland, the Soviet Union, East Germany, China, Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria and the notable

increase of Syrian cotton exports to these countries were regarded in the Western capitals among the major indicators of the deepening Soviet penetration of Syria that exposed the latter to the 'danger of becoming a Communist client state'.² This kind of evaluations formed the basis for the covert countermeasures that aimed at replacing the 'leftist coalition of forces supported by the Soviets' with an 'anti-communist government' in Syria.³ As such they underline the saliency of the issue and substantiate the general argument that calls for a flexible and inclusive approach with respect to the delineation of the subject matter of the field and the incorporation of trade policy in foreign policy analysis in particular.

As discussed in the preceding chapters, Syria depended on the services of foreign firms and institutions to undertake development work since it lacked the necessary technology, equipment and technical experts in the post-independence period. Yet, the controversies that surrounded the awarding of the contract for the construction of Syria's first oil refinery to a Czechoslovak company in 1956 after a long bidding war with an Anglo-American firm, covered in Chapter Five, underlines the importance of the development problematic in post-colonial states and provides an outstanding example that illustrates the elevation of an issue of economic nature to the ranks of high politics. As we have seen, until the introduction of the Cold War to the region, the distribution of contracts to the companies of West or East for the implementation of Syrian development projects had not become an issue of contention but the subsequent awarding of a simple contract for the implementation of a development project to a company of the East became a measure of Syria's direction in both internal and external affairs and showed how much they were interlocked.

In terms of its repercussions and consequences the case of the awarding of the contract to a Czechoslovakian firm was drastically overshadowed by the Syrian-Soviet co-operation agreement of 1957 which would have helped Syrians carry out the great majority of their planned public development projects if it had been allowed to be implemented without hindrance. As discussed in Chapter Five, the news of a sweeping co-operation agreement sufficed to trigger a crisis that brought the superpowers, regional powers and the contending Syrian factions into confrontation. While the robust

² Seale, 1986: 255-259. Also see Laqueur, 1957; Mufti, 1996: 75-87.

³ See Little, 1990: 66-67.

support given by Moscow and Cairo to Syria during the crisis confirmed the Soviet Union and Egypt as Syria's twin protectors, it was the outcome of internal political struggle which made Syria choose, at the expense of its independence and sovereignty, Egypt rather than the Soviet Union as its ultimate custodian. As expected, once the union with Egypt was formed, the leaders of the Ba'th and the senior military officers who provided the muscles to the drive for the merger received high positions in the unified state whereas the architect of the Syrian-Soviet agreement 'Azm was sidelined and the Syrian Communist Party was forced to go underground. This whole episode is an excellent but not exceptional case that reflects the interconnectedness of the 'considerations of plenty' and the 'considerations of power'; the overlapping of domestic politics and foreign policy; and the collapse of the traditional dichotomy which separates 'high' and 'low' politics.

On the other hand, while acknowledging the genuine ideological appeal of pan-Arab unity in Syria which prided itself as the 'beating heart of Arabism' it needs to be added that the major proponents of unity projects during the period under consideration were not willing to subordinate their political ambitions to higher pan-Arab ideals. This can be said with respect to both the People's Party which worked to bring about unity with Iraq especially during the Hinnawi interlude that has been covered in Chapter Four and the Ba'th Party which led the drive for unity with Egypt especially after President Nasser had attained an unmatched standing as a progressive Arab leader following his emergence as one of the most prominent spokesmen for neutralism after the Bandung Conference and the announcement of the Egyptian-Czech arms deal that broke the Western arms monopoly. In the case of both the People's Party and the Ba'th the choice of partners was crucial: unity was only pursued with prospective partners that were expected to enhance the position of those who worked to bring it out. Thus unity projects were pursued because political and economic expediency and ideals were happily and inextricably intertwined. As such, they underscore the potential of an intimate analysis of the interaction between material interests and ideas and invite a synthesis of materialistic and constructivist approaches.⁴

As discussed in Chapter Six, the vulnerability of the Syrian economy to the vagaries of weather was drastically exposed during the union years which corresponded to Syria's

⁴ Hinnbusch, 2003b.

longest drought spell in modern times. The result was a sharp decline in agricultural output, a slump in exports and a surge in imports. Although oil transit fees amounting to a quarter of the value of the annual exports continued to flow to the Syrian treasury and remained an important source of foreign exchange for the Syrian economy, they alone could not counterbalance the huge trade deficit nor they were ample enough to fill in the vacuum exacerbated by the exodus of Syrian capital. Thus, feeling the strain on Syria's foreign exchange position as early as the summer of 1958, the UAR authorities were prompted to adopt more ambitious development plans to accelerate economic development. As indicated by these ambitious development plans and foreign exchange budgets prepared during the union, the need for foreign assistance, both financial and technical, was acknowledged by planning experts and the political leaders of the regime.

Soviet assistance provided under the Syrian-Soviet economic and technical co-operation agreement that had been signed before the formation of the union was still available since neither the Soviet Union withdrew its commitments nor the UAR authorities cancelled the agreement although Syria ceased to exist as a distinct independent political entity. Yet, total reliance on Soviet credits and technical assistance for Syria's development projects could provide the Soviet Union with an undesirable leverage over the Union's affairs and as a result restrict UAR's freedom of action at least against local Communists who were seen as a threat to the regime. Therefore, although it covered Syria's all major development projects the full implementation of the Syrian-Soviet agreement was avoided and Soviet involvement in Syrian development efforts was not allowed to flourish during the union years.

Instead, as part of a diversification drive, assistance was sought from other quarters and alternative agreements which at times provided for credit with less favourable conditions were concluded. The largest in scope among these was the agreement with West Germany which covered the gigantic Euphrates project. Moreover, the sceptical attitude towards US aid and loans from the World Bank and the IMF which had been an important factor in preventing earlier Syrian regimes from procuring such aid or loans was set aside. While the ensuing agreements with the US and the IMF meant a departure from the past for Syria, they were also part of a deliberate US policy which recognised the impact of economic assistance on relations between states and the importance of reaching economic objectives for the survival of political regimes. Hence,

US economic aid to both the Syrian and Egyptian regions of the UAR played a key role in engendering the US-UAR *rapprochement* that characterised the union period.

Thus, during the union years Syria learnt to utilise non-alignment to access development resources from both Cold War blocks and a certain measure of diversification of credit suppliers was achieved but at a cost at least in the form of delays was also paid. Accordingly, it seems evident that during the UAR period the goals of regime maintenance and the maximisation of autonomy, while reinforcing one another, clearly took precedence over the goal of the acquisition of external resources for economic development.

As discussed in Chapter Six, the first government of the Separatist regime engaged in a drive to obtain recognition from the international community which showed certain reluctance especially after President Nasser broke off diplomatic relations with Turkey and Jordan, the two countries that promptly extended recognition to the new Syrian regime. Indeed, the preliminary foreign policy occupation of Syrian leaders who assumed power by means of unconstitutional change of government can be identified as overcoming the hurdle of obtaining international recognition. Yet, even though it required some effort and even manoeuvring, obtaining international recognition was simply a matter of time for the new rulers once it became clear that they were holding the reins of power in their hands.

The policy of *rapprochement* with the neighbouring Arab countries which followed the Separatist regime's endeavour to obtain international recognition had, as demonstrated in Chapter Six, both political and economic considerations as underlying causes. First of all, the establishment of close co-operative relationships with major Arab actors which was accompanied with a fitting unionist rhetoric helped the leaders of the Separatist regime to counter Cairo's accusations that Syria's secession was a blow to the ideal of pan-Arab unionism. Moreover, since Egypt froze economic as well as political relations in the wake of Syria's secession, the need to revive trade with the neighbouring Arab markets that had suffered considerably during the union years attained great urgency. Last but not least, Syria aimed at getting Iraq's consent to the construction of a dam on the Euphrates, a condition put forward by the West German government for it to provide the much-needed financial and technical assistance to Syria's biggest

development project. On its part, the Iraqi regime sought to obtain Syria's endorsement of its claim to sovereignty over Kuwait which was being presented as an integral part of the Iraqi conception of 'security and liberation'. In return Qasim's regime offered economic and military co-operation as well as prospects of an agreement over the sharing of the waters of the Euphrates that would clear the way for the implementation of the Syrian-West German agreement. As such, the diversity in the nature of motives of both Syria and Iraq once again highlights the obscurity of the traditionally maintained distinction between 'high' and 'low' politics.

As we have seen in Chapter Six, the governments of the Separatist regime benefited from the legacy of the union which had made Western economic assistance acceptable by removing the pre-union unease about the political consequences of such assistance. Thus the last government of the Separatist regime formed by one of the main architects of the 1957 Syrian-Soviet economic agreement Khalid al-'Azm benefited from the legacies of both the union and the pre-union periods and succeeded in achieving the greatest degree of diversification in terms of both credit suppliers and trade partners during the fourteen-year period covered by this study. On this basis, it can be concluded that during the Separatist regime the goals of independence, acquisition of foreign economic resources for economic development and regime maintenance worked in harmony and reinforced each other. Yet, this harmony between the foreign policy goals did not suffice to forestall the demise of the Separatist regime. While the intensification of the immense discord that existed between the various factions and movements which formed the ruling coalition weakened the regime, the establishment of a Ba'thist regime in Iraq acted as a catalyst. Exactly a month after the regime change in Iraq, Syria's Separatist regime was overthrown by a coalition of Ba'thist, Nasserists and independent officers. Subsequently, Ba'thist officers eliminated their partners in the coup d'état and helped establish a Ba'thist regime in Syria.

7.3. Concluding Remarks

This study has aimed to make a theoretical and conceptual contribution to the study of foreign policy by making a case and providing evidence that reflect the interconnectedness of the 'considerations of plenty' and the 'considerations of power'; the overlapping of domestic politics and foreign policy; and the contextual nature of the separation of issues of 'high' and 'low' politics. More particularly, it has been argued

that a flexible and inclusive approach with respect to the delineation of the subject matter of the field that does not leave all but issues of war and peace out of the bounds of inquiry is more adequate for foreign policy analysis.

Moreover, this study has aspired to enhance our understanding of Syrian foreign policy in the post-colonial period. In this respect, Syria's foreign policy objectives have been derived from the basic characteristics it shared with other Third World states that came to independent statehood with varying degrees of underdevelopment, dependence, vulnerability and permeability. Therefore, the socio-economic needs of the country have been presented as a source of foreign policy and the acquisition of foreign economic resources has been considered alongside the objectives of independence/autonomy and leadership maintenance/regime consolidation.

On the basis of the preceding analysis that highlighted the interplay of three key foreign policy objectives selected to provide fundamental insights into Syria's foreign policy in its post-independence period, this study suggests that the hypotheses presented in this study may also be applicable to similar cases: (1) If the acquisition of foreign resources for economic development seems to threaten regime maintenance then the latter will take precedence; (2) If a regime's legitimacy is lagging then the search for compensating resources from foreign state or non-state actors in the form of loans, credits, grants or alike will gain greater urgency; (3) The higher the available amount of foreign resources, the higher the propensity to sacrifice the goal of autonomy.

However appealing it may, it would be stretching the argument too far to expect the above hypotheses hold true in the case of all global South states in their post-independence period and beyond. Instead it would be more appropriate to make a distinction between oil rich countries of the global South which can theoretically deploy their revenues to meet the socio-economic needs of their countries and the great majority of global South states that suffer from a resource gap and therefore adopt the acquisition of foreign economic resources as a key foreign policy objective. This study would expect the above hypotheses to be more germane to the states in the latter category. Whether that is the case can only be assessed by further comparative studies but undoubtedly such undertakings would contribute both to foreign policy analysis in general and to the study of global South foreign policies in particular.

STATISTICAL APPENDIX

Table 1. The Population of Syria by Religious Communities and Muhafaza in 1957

| | Damascus | Aleppo | Homs | Hama | Latakia | Hasaka | Dayr al-Zur | Suwayda | Dar'a | Total |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Sunnis | 732,926 | 1,045,455 | 240,886 | 171,868 | 105,943 | 227,629 | 315,669 | 2,221 | 150,788 | 2,993,385 |
| Shi'is | 557 | 10,574 | 4,152 | 190 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 54 | 4 | 15,533 |
| Isma'ilis | 71 | 44 | 251 | 35,537 | 5,111 | 16 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 41,051 |
| Alawites | 6,094 | 3,909 | 61,177 | 67,896 | 297,403 | 128 | 129 | 92 | 378 | 437,206 |
| Greek Orthodox | 32,667 | 12,537 | 57,926 | 28,056 | 42,172 | 408 | 257 | 6,461 | 3,918 | 184,402 |
| Greek Catholic | 25,948 | 14,725 | 8,344 | 569 | 1,058 | 74 | 18 | 3,830 | 6,858 | 61,424 |
| Jews | 14,637 | 14,859 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 2,456 | 60 | 0 | 4 | 32,023 |
| Latins | 668 | 4,924 | 565 | 16 | 892 | 31 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 7,124 |
| Syrian Orthodox | 1,486 | 7,025 | 17,483 | 859 | 27 | 32,279 | 921 | 0 | 59 | 61,139 |
| Syrian Catholic | 4,086 | 7,458 | 3,954 | 434 | 0 | 7,092 | 846 | 0 | 0 | 23,870 |
| Chaldeans | 326 | 2,609 | 35 | 2 | 54 | 3,375 | 287 | 0 | 0 | 6,688 |
| Protestants | 2,126 | 3,902 | 2,744 | 865 | 2,913 | 692 | 33 | 450 | 50 | 13,775 |
| Maronites | 1,722 | 4,322 | 2,163 | 1,276 | 8,303 | 59 | 88 | 108 | 4 | 18,045 |
| Armenian Orthodox | 17,914 | 76,065 | 1,746 | 909 | 4,530 | 11,212 | 1,536 | 445 | 41 | 114,398 |
| Armenian Catholic | 2,677 | 11,972 | 1,579 | 91 | 528 | 2,714 | 806 | 154 | 122 | 20,643 |
| Druzes | 21,508 | 1,232 | 24 | 13 | 22 | 11 | 35 | 106,959 | 9 | 129,813 |
| Yazidis | 9 | 1,368 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 1,196 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 2,589 |
| Total | 865,422 | 1,222,980 | 403,030 | 308,582 | 468,972 | 290,372 | 321,499 | 120,774 | 162,235 | 4,163,108 |

Source: Etude sur 'La Syrie Economique 1957', Annex 8. (Minor discrepancies in totals are due to the original source)

Table 2. Gross Investment in Syria by Sector, 1950-1963

| Year | Total Gross Investment (Million SL) | Private Sector Investment (Million SL) | Private Sector Investment as a Percentage of Total Gross Investment | Public Sector Investment (Million SL) | Public Sector Investment as a Percentage of Total Gross Investment |
|------|-------------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1950 | 187.2 | 161.4 | 86.22 | 25.8 | 13.78 |
| 1951 | 226.6 | 195.6 | 85.94 | 31 | 14.06 |
| 1952 | 205.6 | 176.7 | 82.33 | 28.9 | 17.67 |
| 1953 | 225.2 | 185.4 | 86.32 | 39.8 | 13.68 |
| 1954 | 333.7 | 294.4 | 88.22 | 39.3 | 11.78 |
| 1955 | 348.1 | 289.3 | 83.1 | 58.8 | 16.9 |
| 1956 | 374.5 | 305.3 | 81.52 | 69.2 | 18.48 |
| 1957 | 266.2 | 205.8 | 77.3 | 60.4 | 22.7 |
| 1958 | 319.4 | 235.3 | 73.66 | 84.1 | 26.34 |
| 1959 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| 1960 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| 1961 | 465.8 | 270.5 | 58.07 | 195.3 | 41.93 |
| 1962 | 629.2 | 456.1 | 72.48 | 173.1 | 27.52 |
| 1963 | 611.6 | 445.7 | 72.87 | 165.9 | 27.13 |

Sources: For 1950-1953: IBRD, 1955: 21 ; For 1954-1963: Syrian Statistical Abstract, Various Issues.

Table 3. Direction of Trade, 1951-1963

(Thousand SL)

| Country | 1951 | | | | 1952 | | | | 1953 | | | | 1954 | | | | 1955 | | | | 1956 | | | | | | 1957 | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|----------------|----------------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|-----------------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| | Exports | % ^a | Imports ^b | % | Exports | % | Imports | % | Exports | % | Imports | % | Exports | % | Imports | % | Exports | % | Imports | % | Exports | % | Imports | % | Imports (Adjusted) | % | Exports | % | Imports | % |
| Western Countries ^c | 128,500 | 46.4 | 192,670 | 63.4 | 177,100 | 55.4 | 186,640 | 59.6 | 212,700 | 56.6 | 192,740 | 62.8 | 246,264 | 52.9 | 258,758 | 63.4 | 254,534 | 53.8 | 250,629 | 58.2 | 217,547 | 42.2 | 245,910 | 54.7 | 394,481 | 57.2 | 209,701 | 38.3 | 341,584 | 55.4 |
| Of w hich | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| United States | 37,362 | 13.5 | 55,514 | 18.3 | 15,945 | 5.0 | 45,470 | 14.5 | 20,837 | 5.5 | 37,675 | 12.3 | 19,157 | 4.1 | 49,180 | 12.1 | 21,285 | 4.5 | 47,288 | 11.0 | 21,219 | 4.5 | 47,697 | 10.6 | 77,173 | 11.2 | 20,775 | 3.8 | 69,143 | 11.2 |
| France | 50,353 | 18.2 | 31,727 | 10.4 | 49,166 | 15.4 | 29,573 | 9.4 | 58,513 | 15.6 | 32,684 | 10.6 | 72,271 | 15.5 | 48,064 | 11.8 | 98,119 | 20.7 | 42,736 | 9.9 | 63,396 | 12.3 | 36,224 | 8.1 | 57,356 | 8.3 | 56,379 | 10.3 | 42,773 | 6.9 |
| United Kingdom | 19,522 | 7.0 | 38,945 | 12.8 | 77,161 | 24.1 | 39,244 | 12.5 | 46,340 | 12.3 | 33,326 | 10.9 | 29,495 | 6.3 | 48,771 | 12.0 | 40,422 | 8.5 | 55,027 | 12.8 | 10,972 | 2.1 | 52,863 | 11.8 | 84,209 | 12.2 | 6,146 | 1.1 | 47,543 | 7.7 |
| Italy | 14,493 | 5.2 | 21,255 | 7.0 | 16,606 | 5.2 | 20,472 | 6.5 | 31,349 | 8.3 | 21,604 | 7.0 | 18,254 | 3.9 | 25,709 | 6.3 | 48,640 | 10.3 | 21,693 | 5.0 | 56,831 | 11.0 | 23,688 | 5.3 | 38,138 | 5.5 | 63,742 | 11.6 | 41,225 | 6.7 |
| West Germany | 2,799 | 1.0 | 16,922 | 5.6 | 9,873 | 3.1 | 19,098 | 6.1 | 24,204 | 6.4 | 29,251 | 9.5 | 27,932 | 6.0 | 39,458 | 9.7 | 21,383 | 4.5 | 44,356 | 10.3 | 30,556 | 5.9 | 43,188 | 9.6 | 69,595 | 10.1 | 29,594 | 5.4 | 65,671 | 10.7 |
| Arab Countries ^d | 110,700 | 39.9 | 55,100 | 18.1 | 122,700 | 38.4 | 59,900 | 19.1 | 149,000 | 39.6 | 63,300 | 20.6 | 181,467 | 39.0 | 73,973 | 18.1 | 170,903 | 36.1 | 83,814 | 19.5 | 209,401 | 40.6 | 112,021 | 24.9 | 155,867 | 22.6 | 200,666 | 36.6 | 118,826 | 19.3 |
| Of w hich | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lebanon | 59,453 | 21.5 | 34,088 | 11.2 | 70,279 | 22.0 | 39,244 | 12.5 | 90,238 | 24.0 | 33,379 | 10.9 | 123,804 | 26.6 | 38,567 | 9.5 | 101,140 | 21.4 | 25,324 | 5.9 | 120,672 | 23.4 | 40,191 | 8.9 | 44,945 | 6.5 | 92,961 | 17.0 | 24,601 | 4.0 |
| Iraq | 20,249 | 7.3 | 8,929 | 2.9 | 17,176 | 5.4 | 8,530 | 2.7 | 17,362 | 4.6 | 8,336 | 2.7 | 16,255 | 3.5 | 6,172 | 1.5 | 21,822 | 4.6 | 26,532 | 6.2 | 28,944 | 5.6 | 28,308 | 6.3 | 43,724 | 6.3 | 25,774 | 4.7 | 34,020 | 5.8 |
| Jordan | 12,348 | 4.5 | 4,354 | 1.4 | 16,846 | 5.3 | 6,000 | 1.9 | 21,702 | 5.8 | 8,292 | 2.7 | 20,942 | 4.5 | 9,064 | 2.2 | 17,237 | 3.6 | 9,436 | 2.2 | 15,089 | 2.9 | 10,070 | 2.2 | 15,085 | 2.2 | 17,767 | 3.2 | 12,589 | 2.0 |
| S. Arabia | 8,491 | 3.1 | 3,555 | 1.2 | 10,330 | 3.2 | 7,910 | 2.5 | 12,188 | 3.2 | 11,873 | 3.9 | 12,001 | 2.6 | 14,724 | 3.6 | 10,790 | 2.3 | 14,904 | 3.5 | 19,309 | 3.7 | 22,359 | 5.0 | 34,644 | 5.0 | 22,342 | 4.1 | 30,782 | 5.0 |
| Egypt | 7,203 | 2.6 | 3,702 | 1.2 | 4,510 | 1.4 | 1,370 | 0.4 | 3,428 | 0.9 | 825 | 0.3 | 3,063 | 0.7 | 4,788 | 1.2 | 5,169 | 1.1 | 6,822 | 1.6 | 9,030 | 1.8 | 8,344 | 1.9 | 12,936 | 1.9 | 31,785 | 5.8 | 14,262 | 2.3 |
| Socialist Countries | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Of w hich | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Soviet Union | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Czechoslovakia | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Poland | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Romania | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bulgaria | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| East Germany | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hungary | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| China | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Others | 37,934 | 13.7 | 56,181 | 17.3 | 19,773 | 6.2 | 66,800 | 21.3 | 14,125 | 3.8 | 40,881 | 13.3 | 35,566 | 7.6 | 64,906 | 15.9 | 42,291 | 8.9 | 83,564 | 19.4 | 50,037 | 9.7 | 74,899 | 16.7 | 111,602 | 16.2 | 42,534 | 7.8 | 108,516 | 17.6 |
| Total | 277,134 | 100.0 | 303,951 | 100.0 | 319,573 | 100.0 | 313,340 | 100.0 | 375,825 | 100.0 | 307,050 | 100.0 | 465,737 | 100.0 | 408,106 | 100.0 | 473,543 | 100.0 | 430,528 | 100.0 | 515,924 | 100.0 | 449,282 | 100.0 | 690,003 | 100.0 | 547,985 | 100.0 | 616,055 | 100.0 |

| Country | 1958 | | | | 1959 | | | | 1960 | | | | 1961 | | | | 1962 | | | | 1963 | | | |
|---------------------|---------|-------|----------------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| | Exports | % | Imports ^b | % | Exports | % | Imports | % | Exports | % | Imports | % | Exports | % | Imports | % | Exports | % | Imports | % | Exports | % | Imports | % |
| Western Countries | 123,036 | 29.3 | 423,060 | 58.0 | 133,875 | 37.7 | 387,345 | 60.7 | 97,140 | 28.2 | 506,110 | 62.8 | 96,050 | 24.3 | 385,157 | 54.1 | 231,947 | 37.6 | 492,787 | 57.1 | 205,008 | 28.4 | 478,730 | 53.4 |
| Of which | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| United States | 14,452 | 3.4 | 62,415 | 8.6 | 26,061 | 7.3 | 49,266 | 7.7 | 11,923 | 3.5 | 114,920 | 14.3 | 12,414 | 3.1 | 108,614 | 15.3 | 8,007 | 1.3 | 106,314 | 12.3 | 14,237 | 2.0 | 61,808 | 6.9 |
| France | 42,299 | 10.1 | 54,993 | 7.5 | 57,477 | 16.2 | 58,905 | 9.2 | 33,243 | 9.7 | 68,703 | 8.5 | 26,145 | 6.6 | 37,155 | 5.2 | 56,795 | 9.2 | 64,728 | 7.5 | 64,689 | 9.0 | 52,562 | 5.9 |
| United Kingdom | 10,578 | 2.5 | 82,666 | 11.3 | 15,351 | 4.3 | 54,264 | 8.5 | 11,906 | 3.5 | 61,858 | 7.7 | 8,915 | 2.3 | 51,579 | 7.3 | 15,039 | 2.4 | 86,150 | 10.0 | 10,152 | 1.4 | 95,855 | 10.7 |
| Italy | 39,534 | 9.4 | 38,874 | 5.3 | 20,706 | 5.8 | 40,698 | 6.4 | 14,084 | 4.1 | 48,471 | 6.0 | 18,648 | 4.7 | 34,747 | 4.9 | 69,034 | 11.2 | 43,957 | 5.1 | 69,125 | 9.6 | 51,827 | 5.8 |
| West Germany | 9,921 | 2.4 | 83,821 | 11.5 | 8,925 | 2.5 | 84,252 | 13.2 | 13,440 | 3.9 | 94,349 | 11.7 | 12,261 | 3.1 | 80,587 | 11.3 | 41,345 | 6.7 | 97,556 | 11.3 | 18,009 | 2.5 | 115,366 | 12.9 |
| Arab Countries | 136,578 | 32.5 | 95,715 | 13.1 | 126,282 | 35.5 | 58,905 | 9.2 | 115,053 | 33.4 | 85,134 | 10.6 | 136,115 | 34.5 | 148,975 | 20.9 | 171,563 | 27.8 | 96,732 | 11.2 | 206,816 | 28.7 | 126,023 | 14.1 |
| Of which | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lebanon | 56,850 | 13.5 | 37,313 | 5.1 | 52,479 | 14.8 | 28,917 | 4.5 | 48,482 | 14.1 | 28,673 | 3.6 | 41,895 | 10.6 | 22,986 | 3.2 | 95,098 | 15.4 | 30,951 | 3.6 | 111,348 | 15.4 | 39,571 | 4.4 |
| Iraq | 19,109 | 4.5 | 24,220 | 3.3 | 11,781 | 3.3 | 14,994 | 2.4 | 2,528 | 0.7 | 44,763 | 5.6 | 8,916 | 2.3 | 46,998 | 6.6 | 21,640 | 3.5 | 49,520 | 5.7 | 25,729 | 3.6 | 55,141 | 6.2 |
| Jordan | 22,702 | 5.4 | 10,337 | 1.4 | 23,562 | 6.6 | 7,497 | 1.2 | 24,073 | 7.0 | 7,455 | 0.9 | 19,130 | 4.8 | 9,030 | 1.3 | 21,984 | 3.6 | 10,028 | 1.2 | 40,592 | 5.6 | 11,601 | 1.3 |
| S. Arabia | 24,916 | 5.9 | 18,752 | 2.6 | 20,349 | 5.7 | 5,355 | 0.8 | 26,815 | 7.8 | 3,250 | 0.4 | 15,122 | 3.8 | 1,309 | 0.2 | 18,361 | 3.0 | 1,914 | 0.2 | 19,021 | 2.6 | 1,953 | 0.2 |
| Egypt | | | | | 5,259 | 1.5 | | | | | | | 42,736 | 10.8 | 67,659 | 9.5 | 5,259 | 0.9 | 3,218 | 0.4 | 381 | 0.1 | 12,525 | 1.4 |
| Socialist Countries | 107,465 | 25.6 | 84,118 | 11.5 | 38,556 | 10.8 | 65,331 | 10.2 | 71,284 | 20.7 | 64,360 | 8.0 | 55,283 | 14.0 | 64,747 | 9.1 | 129,093 | 20.9 | 97,367 | 11.3 | 158,533 | 22.0 | 70,790 | 7.9 |
| Of which | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Soviet Union | 66,604 | 15.9 | 13,065 | 1.8 | 15,351 | 4.3 | 21,420 | 3.4 | 23,465 | 6.8 | 26,230 | 3.3 | 11,709 | 3.0 | 28,933 | 4.1 | 19,001 | 3.1 | 13,704 | 1.6 | 51,954 | 7.2 | 9,028 | 1.0 |
| Czechoslovakia | 21,010 | 5.0 | 35,531 | 4.9 | 12,138 | 3.4 | 12,495 | 2.0 | 21,426 | 6.2 | 12,871 | 1.6 | 18,058 | 4.6 | 10,459 | 1.5 | 21,295 | 3.5 | 24,484 | 2.8 | 16,596 | 2.3 | 16,014 | 1.8 |
| Poland | | | 1,536 | 0.2 | | | 2,499 | 0.4 | 6,712 | 1.9 | 1,828 | 0.2 | 1,367 | 0.3 | 2,987 | 0.4 | 17,899 | 2.9 | 20,542 | 2.4 | 15,869 | 2.2 | 14,334 | 1.6 |
| Romania | 5,868 | 1.4 | 14,253 | 2.0 | 2,856 | 0.8 | 12,138 | 1.9 | 8,132 | 2.4 | 10,319 | 1.3 | 9,673 | 2.5 | 9,908 | 1.4 | 27,471 | 4.5 | 19,571 | 2.3 | 42,855 | 5.9 | 11,827 | 1.3 |
| Bulgaria | 4,725 | 1.1 | 3,839 | 0.5 | 4,641 | 1.3 | 3,213 | 0.5 | 6,298 | 1.8 | 2,726 | 0.3 | 8,452 | 2.1 | 3,120 | 0.4 | 36,545 | 5.9 | 5,997 | 0.7 | 4,835 | 0.7 | 8,388 | 0.9 |
| East Germany | 3,923 | 0.9 | 8,525 | 1.2 | 1,428 | 0.4 | 6,783 | 1.1 | 283 | 0.1 | 6,664 | 0.8 | 2,172 | 0.6 | 6,907 | 1.0 | 3,689 | 0.6 | 7,750 | 0.9 | 5,634 | 0.8 | 4,555 | 0.5 |
| Hungary | 5,335 | 1.3 | 7,369 | 1.0 | 2,142 | 0.6 | 6,783 | 1.1 | 4,968 | 1.4 | 3,722 | 0.5 | 3,852 | 1.0 | 2,433 | 0.3 | 3,193 | 0.5 | 5,319 | 0.6 | 20,790 | 2.9 | 6,644 | 0.7 |
| China | 24,102 | 5.7 | 4,123 | 0.6 | 357 | 0.1 | 6,069 | 1.0 | 8,318 | 2.4 | 4,471 | 0.6 | 43,354 | 11.0 | 3,987 | 0.6 | 15,711 | 2.5 | 13,326 | 1.5 | 76,124 | 10.6 | 11,454 | 1.3 |
| Others | 28,833 | 6.9 | 122,627 | 16.8 | 56,502 | 15.9 | 120,309 | 18.9 | 52,413 | 15.2 | 145,732 | 18.1 | 63,932 | 16.2 | 108,456 | 15.2 | 68,844 | 11.2 | 162,068 | 18.8 | 74,442 | 10.3 | 209,230 | 23.3 |
| Total | 420,014 | 100.0 | 729,643 | 100.0 | 355,572 | 100.0 | 637,959 | 100.0 | 344,208 | 100.0 | 805,807 | 100.0 | 394,734 | 100.0 | 711,322 | 100.0 | 617,158 | 100.0 | 862,280 | 100.0 | 720,923 | 100.0 | 896,227 | 100.0 |

^a Figures for various items have been rounded.

^b Imports are calculated at official exchange rate but adjusted import figures for 1956 are given for comparison purposes.

^c Including United States, France, United Kingdom, Italy, West Germany, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Trieste and Sweden.

^d Including Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, S. Arabia, Egypt, Kuwait, Bahrain, Aden and Yemen.

^e No figures are given when exports to Syria or imports from it did not exceed SL1 million.

Source: Syrian Statistical Abstract, Various Issues.

Table 4. Balance of Trade, 1951-1963**(millions)**

| Year | Exports | | Imports | | Trade Balance | | |
|------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Customs Figures (Syrian Lira) | IMF figures (US\$) | Customs Figures (Syrian Lira) | IMF figures (US\$) | Customs Figures (Syrian Lira) | IMF figures (Syrian Lira) | IMF figures (US\$) |
| 1951 | 277.1 | 87.6 | 303.9 | 133.0 | -26.8 | -173.4 | -45.4 |
| 1952 | 319.5 | 98.1 | 313.3 | 138.0 | 6.2 | -148.0 | -39.9 |
| 1953 | 375.8 | 116.0 | 307.0 | 131.0 | 68.8 | -53.7 | -15.0 |
| 1954 | 465.7 | 147.7 | 408.1 | 174.0 | 57.6 | -94.2 | -26.3 |
| 1955 | 473.5 | 143.7 | 430.5 | 179.1 | 43.0 | -126.7 | -35.4 |
| 1956 | 515.9 | 148.2 | 449.2 | 187.2 | 66.7 | -140.8 | -39.0 |
| 1957 | 548.0 | 153.5 | 616.0 | 172.3 | -68.0 | -67.5 | -18.8 |
| 1958 | 420.0 | 122.1 | 730.0 | 211.2 | -310.0 | -335.0 | -89.1 |
| 1959 | 356.0 | 118.8 | 638.0 | 194.1 | -282.0 | -275.6 | -75.3 |
| 1960 | 344.0 | 113.3 | 806.0 | 240.1 | -462.0 | -503.4 | -126.8 |
| 1961 | 395.0 | 110.4 | 711.0 | 199.0 | -316.0 | -317.2 | -88.6 |
| 1962 | 617.0 | 168.0 | 862.0 | 232.0 | -245.0 | -245.1 | -64.0 |
| 1963 | 721.0 | 188.7 | 896.2 | 235.0 | -175.2 | -176.9 | -46.3 |

Note: IMF figures include trade with Egypt during the union years whereas trade between the two regions of the union (Syria and Egypt) was considered internal trade and as such not included in Syrian foreign trade statistics.

Sources: Table 3 on Direction of Trade (for customs figures); and International Monetary Fund, International Financial Statistics 1972 Supplement: 224-225.

Table 5. Syrian Trade with Egypt 1953-1963 (Million SL)

| Year | Exports | Imports | Balance |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1953 | 3.4 | 0.8 | 2.6 |
| 1954 | 3.1 | 4.8 | -1.7 |
| 1955 | 5.2 | 6.8 | -1.7 |
| 1956 | 9.0 | 8.3 | 0.7 |
| 1957 | 31.8 | 14.2 | 17.5 |
| 1958 | 16.6 | 25.5 | -8.9 |
| 1959 | 68.4 | 41.8 | 26.6 |
| 1960 | 61.0 | 52.5 | 8.5 |
| 1961 | 42.7 | 67.7 | -24.9 |
| 1962 | 5.3 | 3.2 | 2.0 |
| 1963 | 0.4 | 12.5 | -12.1 |

Source: La Syrie Economique, 1963, (Damascus, Bureau des Documentations Syriennes et Arabes), Table 100.

Table 6. Budgetary and Extrabudgetary Expenditures and Receipts of Central Government, 1949-1953 (Million SL)

| Item | 1949 | 1950-51 | 1951-52 | 1953 |
|---------------------------------------|--------|---------|---------|-------|
| Ordinary budget expenditures | 141.1 | 234.1 | 266.0 | 196.0 |
| Defense | 49.3 | 102.5 | 104.6 | 66.0 |
| Other | 91.8 | 131.6 | 161.4 | 130.0 |
| Extrabudgetary outlays | 117.0 | | | 20.7 |
| Extraordinary defense expenditures | 89.0 | | | - |
| Total expenditures | 847.2 | | | 216.7 |
| Ordinary budget receipts | 136.1 | 208.3 | 271.7 | 216.7 |
| Extraordinary budget receipts | 18.0 | | | - |
| Repayments of extrabudgetary advances | 15.2 | | | 5.7 |
| Total receipts | 649.3 | | | 222.4 |
| Ordinary budget balance | -5.0 | -25.8 | 5.7 | 20.7 |
| Apparent revenue deficit | -197.9 | | | 5.7 |

Sources: IBRD, 1955, Table 5: 259; Syrian Statistical Abstract 1955: 230-235.

Table 7. Estimated Ordinary Budget Revenues of Central Government and Their Percentage Composition,^a (1949-1963)

(Thousand SL)

| Source | 1949 | | 1950-51 ^b | | 1951-52 ^b | | 1953 | | 1954 | | 1955 | | 1956 | | 1957 | |
|---|---------|-------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % |
| Direct taxation | 31,450 | 23.1 | 46,428 | 22.3 | 77,662 | 28.6 | 56,953 | 26.3 | 59,906 | 24.6 | 66,178 | 23.6 | 81,855 | 24.6 | 94,197 | 27.9 |
| Schedular income taxes | 6,908 | 5.1 | 10,109 | 4.9 | 14,383 | 5.3 | 15,200 | 7.0 | 13,860 | 5.7 | 21,675 | 7.7 | 22,703 | 6.8 | 27,055 | 8.0 |
| Tax on non-agricultural real estate | 2,621 | 1.9 | 4,710 | 2.3 | 6,997 | 2.6 | 5,626 | 2.6 | 4,594 | 1.9 | 6,366 | 2.3 | 8,426 | 2.5 | 10,540 | 3.1 |
| Business and professional licence tax (temettu) | 1,850 | 5.1 | 2,921 | 22.3 | 3,513 | 1.3 | 2,887 | 1.3 | 2,655 | 1.1 | 3,351 | 1.2 | 3,912 | 1.2 | 4,936 | 1.5 |
| Miscellaneous direct taxes | 1,149 | 0.8 | 1,881 | 0.9 | 3,097 | 1.1 | 2,837 | 1.3 | 2,915 | 1.2 | 3,929 | 1.4 | 4,868 | 1.5 | 19,578 | 5.8 |
| Agricultural production tax | 12,901 | 9.5 | 20,410 | 9.8 | 34,795 | 12.8 | 22,338 | 10.3 | 27,226 | 11.2 | 21,679 | 7.7 | 30,646 | 9.2 | 20,242 | 6.0 |
| Livestock tax | 6,021 | 4.4 | 6,397 | 3.1 | 14,877 | 5.5 | 8,065 | 3.7 | 8,656 | 3.6 | 9,178 | 3.3 | 11,300 | 3.4 | 11,846 | 3.5 |
| Indirect Taxation | 80,206 | 58.9 | 106,529 | 51.1 | 124,027 | 45.7 | 104,692 | 48.3 | 118,031 | 48.5 | 135,052 | 48.2 | 131,809 | 39.6 | 151,642 | 45.0 |
| Excise taxes ^c | 38,689 | 28.4 | 56,895 | 27.3 | 59,886 | 22.0 | 62,468 | 28.8 | 60,838 | 25.0 | 71,533 | 25.5 | 69,809 | 21.0 | 79,656 | 23.6 |
| Customs duties | 41,517 | 30.5 | 49,634 | 23.8 | 64,141 | 23.6 | 42,224 | 19.5 | 57,193 | 23.5 | 63,519 | 22.7 | 62,000 | 18.6 | 71,986 | 21.4 |
| Registration fees | 9,261 | 6.8 | 16,756 | 8.0 | 28,855 | 10.6 | 24,134 | 11.1 | 27,575 | 11.3 | 30,109 | 10.7 | 36,944 | 11.1 | 30,883 | 9.2 |
| Revenue from state property | 1,444 | 1.1 | 2,696 | 1.3 | 8,160 | 3.0 | 6,782 | 3.1 | 7,034 | 2.9 | 5,012 | 1.8 | 2,645 | 0.8 | 2,416 | 0.7 |
| Industries | 293 | 0.2 | 580 | 0.3 | 615 | 0.2 | 711 | 0.3 | 634 | 0.3 | 783 | 0.3 | 3,825 | 1.1 | 3,616 | 1.1 |
| Revenues from public services | 12,674 | 9.3 | 34,106 | 16.4 | 28,375 | 10.4 | 22,446 | 10.4 | 29,484 | 12.1 | 41,336 | 14.8 | 74,021 | 22.3 | 52,729 | 15.6 |
| Revenues from petroleum | 1,982 | 1.5 | 2,451 | 1.2 | 4,475 | 1.6 | 12,134 | 5.6 | 7,627 | 3.1 | 10,588 | 3.8 | 56,817 | 17.1 | 32,789 | 9.7 |
| Extraordinary proceeds | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Relief aid from Egypt | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Settlement of old petroleum revenues | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| All Other | 769 | 0.6 | 1,219 | 0.6 | 3,993 | 1.5 | 933 | 0.4 | 947 | 0.4 | 1,651 | 0.6 | 1,543 | 0.5 | 1,606 | 0.5 |
| Total | 136,097 | 100.0 | 208,314 | 100.0 | 271,687 | 100.0 | 216,651 | 100.0 | 243,611 | 100.0 | 280,121 | 100.0 | 332,642 | 100.0 | 337,089 | 100.0 |

| Source | First Half of 1958 | | 1958-1959 | | 1959-1960 | | 1960-1961 | | 1961-1962 | | 1/7/1962-31/12/1963 | |
|---|--------------------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|---------------------|-------|
| | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % |
| Direct taxation | 52,252 | 24.1 | 109,504 | 23.7 | 120,125 | 24.3 | 118,150 | 23.1 | 140,000 | 25.3 | 231,587 | 24.5 |
| Schedular income taxes | 13,526 | 6.2 | 27,052 | 5.9 | 35,700 | 7.2 | 36,350 | 7.1 | 38,500 | 7.0 | 63,000 | 6.7 |
| Tax on non-agricultural real estate | 5,631 | 2.6 | 11,262 | 2.4 | 14,000 | 2.8 | 18,000 | 3.5 | 18,200 | 3.3 | 29,087 | 3.1 |
| Business and professional licence tax (temettu) | 2,468 | 1.1 | 4,936 | 1.1 | 5,500 | 1.1 | 6,500 | 1.3 | 6,400 | 1.2 | 10,500 | 1.1 |
| Miscellaneous direct taxes | 12,627 | 5.8 | 30,254 | 6.6 | 27,925 | 5.7 | 24,300 | 4.7 | 35,900 | 6.5 | 43,500 | 4.6 |
| Agricultural production tax | 10,000 | 4.6 | 20,000 | 4.3 | 25,000 | 5.1 | 24,000 | 4.7 | 30,000 | 5.4 | 66,000 | 7.0 |
| Livestock tax | 8,000 | 3.7 | 16,000 | 3.5 | 12,000 | 2.4 | 9,000 | 1.8 | 11,000 | 2.0 | 19,500 | 2.1 |
| Indirect Taxation | 78,962 | 36.5 | 165,743 | 35.9 | 185,300 | 37.6 | 176,000 | 34.4 | 197,460 | 35.7 | 306,350 | 32.5 |
| Excise taxes ^c | 42,962 | 19.9 | 93,724 | 20.3 | 97,300 | 19.7 | 101,000 | 19.7 | 112,460 | 20.4 | 181,350 | 19.2 |
| Customs duties | 36,000 | 16.6 | 72,019 | 15.6 | 88,000 | 17.8 | 75,000 | 14.6 | 85,000 | 15.4 | 125,000 | 13.3 |
| Registration fees | 14,964 | 6.9 | 29,828 | 6.5 | 38,000 | 7.7 | 44,000 | 8.6 | 70,870 | 12.8 | 121,625 | 12.9 |
| Revenue from state property | 1,175 | 0.5 | 2,350 | 0.5 | 300 | 0.1 | 85 | 0.0 | 50 | 0.0 | 75 | 0.0 |
| Industries | 1,852 | 0.9 | 3,629 | 0.8 | 2,880 | 0.6 | 3,370 | 0.7 | 3,650 | 0.7 | 6,600 | 0.7 |
| Revenues from public services | 34,780 | 16.1 | 102,434 | 22.2 | 125,570 | 25.5 | 103,315 | 20.2 | 126,920 | 23.0 | 210,412 | 22.3 |
| Revenues from petroleum | 28,011 | 12.9 | 85,696 | 18.6 | 96,000 | 19.5 | 92,000 | 18.0 | 110,000 | 19.9 | 175,500 | 18.6 |
| Extraordinary proceeds | 31,419 | 14.5 | 21,000 | 4.6 | 19,000 | 3.9 | 22,000 | 4.3 | 4,000 | 0.7 | 62,973 | 6.7 |
| Relief aid from Egypt | 0 | 0.0 | 25,000 | 5.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 22,225 | 4.3 | 7,225 | 1.3 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Settlement of old petroleum revenues | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 20,830 | 4.1 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| All Other | 1,015 | 0.5 | 1,630 | 0.4 | 2,200 | 0.4 | 2,250 | 0.4 | 2,250 | 0.4 | 3,750 | 0.4 |
| Total | 216,419 | 100.0 | 461,118 | 100.0 | 493,375 | 100.0 | 512,225 | 100.0 | 552,425 | 100.0 | 943,372 | 100.0 |

^a Percentage composition is my own calculation and figures for the various items have been rounded.

^b 1 January 1950-30 June 1951; and 1 July 1951-31 December 1952

^c Includes revenues from tobacco monopoly

Source: Syrian Statistical Abstract, Various Issues.

Table 8. Ordinary Budget Expenditures of Central Government and Their Percentage Composition^a (1949-1963)

(Thousand SL)

| Ministries and Departments | 1949 | | 1950-51 ^b | | 1951-52 ^b | | 1953 | | 1954 | | 1955 | | 1956 | | 1957 | |
|--|---------|-------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % |
| Presidency, Council of Ministers, Parliament and Supreme Court | 2,695 | 1.9 | 4,768 | 2.0 | 4,940 | 1.9 | 3,699 | 1.9 | 4,877 | 2.2 | 6,969 | 2.7 | 9,746 | 2.8 | 20,283 | 5.6 |
| Ministry of Foreign Affairs | 2,486 | 1.8 | 2,769 | 1.2 | 4,747 | 1.8 | 4,097 | 2.1 | 4,215 | 1.9 | 5,205 | 2.0 | 6,578 | 1.9 | 7,030 | 1.9 |
| Ministry of Justice | 5,289 | 3.7 | 7,859 | 3.4 | 8,730 | 3.3 | 7,226 | 3.7 | 7,086 | 3.2 | 8,776 | 3.4 | 8,800 | 2.6 | 8,975 | 2.5 |
| Ministry of Finance | 16,047 | 11.4 | 25,285 | 10.8 | 37,168 | 14.0 | 22,721 | 11.6 | 44,248 | 20.2 | 39,255 | 15.1 | 56,753 | 16.5 | 67,562 | 18.5 |
| Of which Public Debt ^c | 10,130 | 7.2 | 16,191 | 6.9 | 25,774 | 9.7 | 14,410 | 7.3 | 35,572 | 16.2 | 29,000 | 11.1 | 44,588 | 13.0 | 55,485 | 15.2 |
| Ministry of National Defense | 49,319 | 34.9 | 102,494 | 43.8 | 104,587 | 39.4 | 65,997 | 33.7 | 75,586 | 34.5 | 81,500 | 31.3 | 120,000 | 35.0 | 140,000 | 38.4 |
| Ministry of Interior | 17,886 | 12.7 | 25,613 | 10.9 | 27,239 | 10.3 | 29,474 | 15.0 | 16,542 | 7.5 | 26,538 | 10.2 | 49,039 | 14.3 | 30,201 | 8.3 |
| Of which Gendarmerie | 11,608 | 8.2 | 15,633 | 6.7 | 16,523 | 6.2 | 21,358 | 10.9 | 8,255 | 3.8 | 15,282 | 5.9 | 18,701 | 5.5 | 16,906 | 4.6 |
| Police and Public Security | 4,381 | 3.1 | 7,114 | 3.0 | 8,084 | 3.0 | 5,882 | 3.0 | 5,991 | 2.7 | 8,000 | 3.1 | 9,297 | 2.7 | 9,063 | 2.5 |
| Ministry of Education | 22,749 | 16.1 | 36,224 | 15.5 | 46,872 | 17.7 | 35,745 | 18.2 | 36,818 | 16.8 | 49,540 | 19.0 | 54,030 | 15.8 | 55,986 | 15.3 |
| Ministry of Public Health | 3,885 | 2.8 | 5,291 | 2.3 | 7,459 | 2.8 | 6,374 | 3.3 | 7,287 | 3.3 | 10,000 | 3.8 | 11,603 | 3.4 | 11,600 | 3.2 |
| Ministry of Economy | 664 | 0.5 | 1,127 | 0.5 | 1,493 | 0.6 | 1,172 | 0.6 | 823 | 0.4 | 1,251 | 0.5 | 1,477 | 0.4 | 1,635 | 0.4 |
| Ministry of Agriculture | 3,671 | 2.6 | 5,854 | 2.5 | 5,512 | 2.1 | 5,102 | 2.6 | 5,346 | 2.4 | 7,875 | 3.0 | 8,046 | 2.3 | 6,545 | 1.8 |
| Ministry of Public Works | 16,429 | 11.6 | 16,860 | 7.2 | 16,786 | 6.3 | 14,500 | 7.4 | 15,844 | 7.2 | 23,100 | 8.9 | 16,286 | 4.7 | 14,149 | 3.9 |
| Ministry of Social Affairs & Labour | | | | | | | | | 494 | 0.2 | 555 | 0.2 | 659 | 0.2 | 795 | 0.2 |
| Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ministry of Religious Endowments ^d | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ministry of Planning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ministry of Communications | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ministry of Industry | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ministry of Culture and National Guidance | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ministry of Agricultural Reform | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ministry of Supply | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ministry of Information ^e | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 141,120 | 100.0 | 234,144 | 100.0 | 265,533 | 100.0 | 196,107 | 100.0 | 219,166 | 100.0 | 260,564 | 100.0 | 343,017 | 100.0 | 364,761 | 100.0 |

| Ministries and Departments | First Half 1958 | | 1958-59 | | 1959-60 | | 1960-61 | | 1961-62 | | 1/7/1962-31/12/1963 | | 1964 | | 1965 | |
|--|-----------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % | Value | % |
| Presidency, Council of Ministers, Parliament and Supreme Court | 3,624 | 1.7 | 5,941 | 1.3 | 9,904 | 2.0 | 8,950 | 1.7 | 15,692 | 2.8 | 12,201 | 1.3 | 7,558 | 1.0 | 5,739 | 0.8 |
| Ministry of Foreign Affairs | 3,190 | 1.5 | 4,000 | 0.9 | 4,000 | 0.8 | 4,000 | 0.8 | 4,000 | 0.7 | 14,299 | 1.5 | 14,533 | 2.0 | 16,877 | 2.4 |
| Ministry of Justice | 2,898 | 1.3 | 6,264 | 1.4 | 7,578 | 1.5 | 7,658 | 1.5 | 8,341 | 1.5 | 16,020 | 1.7 | 10,679 | 1.5 | 10,273 | 1.4 |
| Ministry of Finance | 15,211 | 7.0 | 42,525 | 9.2 | 44,486 | 9.0 | 60,057 | 11.7 | 57,391 | 10.4 | 89,451 | 9.5 | 69,573 | 9.6 | 79,458 | 11.1 |
| Of which Public Debt | 9,937 | 4.6 | 30,660 | 6.6 | 32,739 | 6.6 | 47,978 | 9.4 | 44,818 | 8.1 | 69,472 | 7.4 | 53,661 | 7.4 | 61,621 | 8.6 |
| Ministry of National Defense | 130,125 | 60.1 | 234,000 | 50.7 | 239,000 | 48.4 | 261,225 | 51.0 | 261,225 | 47.3 | 443,000 | 47.0 | 318,640 | 43.8 | 310,800 | 43.3 |
| Ministry of Interior | 15,232 | 7.0 | 39,307 | 8.5 | 40,594 | 8.2 | 39,401 | 7.7 | 44,868 | 8.1 | 83,963 | 8.9 | 64,374 | 8.8 | 58,185 | 8.1 |
| Of which Gendarmerie | 8,350 | 3.9 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Police and Public Security | 4,460 | 2.1 | 31,674 | 6.9 | 34,811 | 7.1 | 34,773 | 6.8 | 38,698 | 7.0 | 76,321 | 8.1 | 59,280 | 8.1 | 54,000 | 7.5 |
| Ministry of Education | 28,454 | 13.1 | 64,024 | 13.9 | 71,557 | 14.5 | 70,478 | 13.8 | 80,068 | 14.5 | 140,799 | 14.9 | 139,735 | 19.2 | 133,400 | 18.6 |
| Ministry of Public Health | 5,532 | 2.6 | 13,434 | 2.9 | 14,627 | 3.0 | 14,774 | 2.9 | 18,290 | 3.3 | 29,763 | 3.2 | 22,966 | 3.2 | 21,600 | 3.0 |
| Ministry of Economy | 780 | 0.4 | 2,415 | 0.5 | 2,006 | 0.4 | 1,631 | 0.3 | 1,972 | 0.4 | 3,485 | 0.4 | 2,334 | 0.3 | 2,409 | 0.3 |
| Ministry of Agriculture | 3,128 | 1.4 | 9,067 | 2.0 | 11,071 | 2.2 | 7,498 | 1.5 | 12,334 | 2.2 | 20,289 | 2.2 | 16,266 | 2.2 | 14,345 | 2.0 |
| Ministry of Public Works | 5,647 | 2.6 | 5,436 | 1.2 | 9,546 | 1.9 | 2,753 | 0.5 | 3,923 | 0.7 | 5,957 | 0.6 | 3,971 | 0.5 | 3,892 | 0.5 |
| Ministry of Social Affairs&Labour | 370 | 0.2 | 5,502 | 1.2 | 6,025 | 1.2 | 1,734 | 0.3 | 4,472 | 0.8 | 5,491 | 0.6 | 3,672 | 0.5 | 3,879 | 0.5 |
| Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs | 334 | 0.2 | 5,054 | 1.1 | 5,208 | 1.1 | 4,960 | 1.0 | 7,811 | 1.4 | 10,842 | 1.1 | 6,808 | 0.9 | 6,278 | 0.9 |
| Ministry of Religious Endowments | 326 | 0.2 | 700 | 0.2 | 728 | 0.1 | 1,114 | 0.2 | 1,288 | 0.2 | 2,141 | 0.2 | 1,566 | 0.2 | 2,674 | 0.4 |
| Ministry of Planning | 154 | 0.1 | 1,167 | 0.3 | 1,502 | 0.3 | 2,311 | 0.5 | 2,261 | 0.4 | 2,605 | 0.3 | 1,736 | 0.2 | 1,620 | 0.2 |
| Ministry of Communications | | | 18,711 | 4.1 | 15,422 | 3.1 | 14,135 | 2.8 | 15,578 | 2.8 | 21,695 | 2.3 | 15,463 | 2.1 | 12,600 | 1.8 |
| Ministry of Industry | | | | | 1,555 | 0.3 | 891 | 0.2 | 1,715 | 0.3 | 2,209 | 0.2 | 1,472 | 0.2 | 2,386 | 0.3 |
| Ministry of Culture and National Guidance | | | | | 4,299 | 0.9 | 2,568 | 0.5 | 3,969 | 0.7 | 6,296 | 0.7 | 5,032 | 0.7 | 4,597 | 0.6 |
| Ministry of Agricultural Reform | 1,414 | 0.7 | 3,571 | 0.8 | 4,267 | 0.9 | 5,137 | 1.0 | 5,246 | 0.9 | 7,622 | 0.8 | 5,081 | 0.7 | 12,350 | 1.7 |
| Ministry of Supply | | | | | | | 950 | 0.2 | 1,981 | 0.4 | 3,095 | 0.3 | 2,063 | 0.3 | 2,100 | 0.3 |
| Ministry of Information | | | | | | | | | | | 22,149 | 2.3 | 14,766 | 2.0 | 11,655 | 1.6 |
| Total | 216,419 | 100.0 | 461,118 | 100.0 | 493,375 | 100.0 | 512,225 | 100.0 | 552,425 | 100.0 | 943,372 | 100.0 | 728,288 | 100.0 | 717,117 | 100.0 |

^a Percentage composition is my own calculation and figures for the various items have been rounded.

^b 1 January 1950-30 June 1951; and 1 July 1951-31 December 1952

^c Includes pensions, indemnities, subsidies, etc.

^d Formerly the Office of Fatwa and Religious Teaching.

^e Formerly the General Directorate of Propaganda and News and added to it the General Directorate of Broadcasting and Television Department.

Source: Syrian Statistical Abstract, Various Issues.

Table 9. Cultivated, Cropped and Irrigated Areas, Selected Years (thousands of hectares)

| Year | Cultivated Area | Cropped Area | Irrigated Area |
|------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1938 | 1,760 | 1,160 | n.a |
| 1945 | 2,290 | 1,510 | 284 |
| 1950 | 3,090 | 2,050 | 395 |
| 1953 | 3,670 | 2,440 | 509 |
| 1956 | 4,590 | 2,973 | 682 |
| 1957 | 4,950 | 3,148 | 583 |
| 1958 | 5,452 | 3,200 | 590 |
| 1959 | 5,491 | 3,377 | 476 |
| 1960 | 6,014 | 3,480 | 527 |
| 1961 | 6,381 | 3,814 | 558 |
| 1962 | 6,263 | 3,201 | 657 |
| 1963 | 6,942 | 3,753 | 670 |
| 1964 | 6,654 | 3,250 | 489 |
| 1965 | 6,341 | 3,348 | 522 |
| 1970 | 5,909 | 3,299 | 451 |
| 1985 | 5,623 | 3,970 | 652 |
| 1990 | 5,626 | 5,466 | 693 |
| 1995 | 5,502 | 4,982 | 1,089 |

Sources: Kanovsky, 1977: 21; and Syrian Statistical Abstract, Various Issues.

Table 10. Area, Production, Exported Quantity and Export Value of Three Main Crops, 1951-1963

(Area in hectares, production and exported quantity in metric tons and value in SL 000)

| Year | Wheat | | | | Barley | | | | Cotton ^a | | | |
|------|-----------|------------|----------|--------------------|---------|------------|----------|--------|---------------------|------------|----------|---------|
| | Area | Production | Exported | | Area | Production | Exported | | Area | Production | Exported | |
| | | | Quantity | Value ^b | | | Quantity | Value | | | Quantity | Value |
| 1951 | 1,037,000 | 510,000 | 2,748 | 872 | 344,000 | 155,000 | 17,175 | 4,167 | 217,400 | 175,500 | 24,088 | 116,493 |
| 1952 | 1,167,000 | 900,000 | 100,227 | 29,758 | 397,000 | 467,000 | 140,135 | 29,400 | 189,300 | 176,400 | 37,786 | 124,323 |
| 1953 | 1,314,000 | 870,000 | 180,195 | 46,035 | 439,000 | 472,000 | 153,268 | 24,793 | 127,600 | 126,000 | 53,946 | 134,703 |
| 1954 | 1,347,000 | 965,000 | 233,013 | 70,342 | 543,000 | 635,000 | 430,990 | 85,535 | 187,300 | 220,800 | 42,175 | 124,572 |
| 1955 | 1,463,000 | 438,000 | 32,775 | 10,600 | 614,000 | 137,000 | 29,219 | 7,546 | 248,800 | 233,300 | 90,848 | 237,630 |
| 1956 | 1,537,000 | 1,051,000 | 179,541 | 56,867 | 636,000 | 462,000 | 300,877 | 65,352 | 272,200 | 252,500 | 58,096 | 153,995 |
| 1957 | 1,495,000 | 1,354,000 | 352,807 | 88,624 | 813,000 | 721,000 | 331,416 | 51,972 | 258,300 | 291,500 | 86,841 | 190,866 |
| 1958 | 1,461,000 | 565,000 | n.a | 38 | 769,000 | 228,000 | n.a. | 13 | 261,000 | 307,000 | n.a. | 171,100 |
| 1959 | 1,422,000 | 632,000 | 238 | 1,043 | 727,000 | 218,000 | 0 | 0 | 227,200 | 265,000 | 90,895 | 168,512 |
| 1960 | 1,550,000 | 555,000 | 1 | n.a | 742,000 | 156,000 | 0 | 0 | 212,300 | 278,700 | 81,272 | 174,687 |
| 1961 | 1,315,000 | 757,000 | 0 | 0 | 727,000 | 335,000 | 25,536 | 3,614 | 249,100 | 324,900 | 88,417 | 205,678 |
| 1962 | 1,417,000 | 1,374,000 | 211,594 | 74,207 | 723,000 | 798,000 | 390,411 | 75,315 | 302,400 | 403,900 | 113,406 | 260,676 |
| 1963 | 1,559,000 | 1,190,000 | 181,260 | 43,670 | 804,000 | 784,000 | 401,820 | 71,757 | 291,700 | 410,000 | 148,122 | 348,771 |

^a Cotton Production Quantity is for unginned cotton and export quantity is for ginned cotton.

^b Values are rounded.

Source: Syrian Statistical Abstract, Various Issues; and La Syrie Economique 1963: 108

Table 11. Total Export Proceeds of Wheat, Barley and Cotton as a Percentage of Total Value of Exports (1951-1963)

| Year | Total Export Proceeds of Wheat, Barley and Cotton in Millions SL (1) | Total Value of Exports in Millions SL (2) | 1 as a Percentage of 2 |
|------|--|---|------------------------|
| 1951 | 121.5 | 277.1 | 43.9% |
| 1952 | 183.5 | 319.6 | 57.4% |
| 1953 | 205.5 | 375.8 | 54.7% |
| 1954 | 280.4 | 465.7 | 60.2% |
| 1955 | 255.8 | 473.5 | 54.0% |
| 1956 | 276.2 | 515.9 | 53.5% |
| 1957 | 331.5 | 548.0 | 60.5% |
| 1958 | 171.2 | 420.0 | 40.7% |
| 1959 | 169.6 | 355.6 | 47.7% |
| 1960 | 174.7 | 344.2 | 50.8% |
| 1961 | 209.3 | 394.7 | 53.0% |
| 1962 | 410.2 | 617.2 | 66.5% |
| 1963 | 464.2 | 720.9 | 64.4% |

Source: Table 3 and Table 10.

Table 12. Syrian Cotton Exports 1951-1957 and 1961-1963

(Thousand SL)

| Country | 1951 | 1952 | 1953 | 1954 | 1955 | 1956 | 1957 | 1961 | 1962 | 1963 |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Western Countries ^a | 82,070 | 109,815 | 125,058 | 109,916 | 196,872 | 95,273 | 84,084 | 60,397 | 80,567 | 104,569 |
| Of which | | | | | | | | | | |
| United Kingdom | 13,158 | 47,948 | 34,430 | 20,360 | 29,666 | 8,268 | 2,189 | 2,953 | 4,669 | 2,978 |
| France | 48,695 | 45,907 | 50,944 | 68,978 | 97,348 | 60,774 | 52,875 | 25,326 | 42,480 | 58,674 |
| West Germany | 2,307 | 6,825 | 22,102 | 8,378 | 15,696 | 7,470 | 14,530 | 7,945 | 12,048 | 7,681 |
| Italy | 10,690 | 6,534 | 15,382 | 10,402 | 34,624 | 15,431 | 13,030 | 11,167 | 15,134 | 25,301 |
| Arab Countries | 30,511 | 6,897 | 5,642 | 8,729 | 12,471 | 10,653 | 9,897 | 7,708 | 16,428 | 7,875 |
| Of which | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lebanon | 30,511 | 6,892 | 4,827 | 8,699 | 11,399 | 10,157 | 9,852 | 7,664 | 16,428 | 7,875 |
| Socialist Bloc | 1,197 | 2,558 | | 101 | 3,314 | 21,648 | 47,037 | 45,433 | 119,523 | 127,253 |
| Of which | | | | | | | | | | |
| Soviet Union | | | | | | 2,470 | 9,554 | 8,198 | 14,812 | 45,979 |
| Czechoslovakia | | | | | 3,314 | 12,041 | 18,328 | 14,286 | 19,724 | 15,020 |
| East Germany | | 297 | | | | | 1,778 | 1,617 | 2,493 | 2,644 |
| Hungary | | | | 101 | | | 571 | 3,852 | 2,409 | 5,879 |
| Poland | 1,197 | 2,261 | | | | 4,431 | 5,453 | 137 | 17,507 | 15,428 |
| Bulgaria | | | | | | 2,706 | 7,816 | 8,152 | 35,109 | 597 |
| Romania | | | | | | | 3,537 | 9,191 | 27,469 | 41,706 |
| Yugoslavia | | | | 531 | | 5,680 | 1,064 | 590 | 450 | 6,576 |
| China | | | | 2,142 | 590 | 5,555 | 35,031 | 43,354 | 13,086 | 76,112 |
| Others | 6,867 | 4,537 | 4,003 | 3,000 | 20,296 | 9,945 | 12,072 | 48,196 | 30,622 | 26,385 |
| Total | 120,645 | 123,807 | 134,703 | 124,419 | 233,543 | 148,754 | 189,185 | 205,678 | 260,676 | 348,770 |

^a Including United States, United Kingdom, France, West Germany, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, Trieste and Sweden.

Sources: La Syrie Economique 1957, Annex 115; and La Syrie Economique 1963: 113.

Table 13. Expropriated and Distributed Land in Syria (1959-1968)**(land area in hectares)**

| Year | Expropriated Land | | | | Distributed Land | | | No. of Distributed Villages | New Land Owners | |
|----------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------|------------------|---------------|---------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| | Irrigated | Non-irrigated | Non-cultivated | Total | Irrigated | Non-irrigated | Total | | Families | Individuals |
| 1959 | 11,577 | 326,042 | 179,211 | 516,830 | 3,504 | 33,230 | 36,734 | 32 | 2,626 | 14,319 |
| 1960 | 8,680 | 146,375 | 12,513 | 167,568 | 2,445 | 20,903 | 23,348 | 52 | 1,632 | 8,897 |
| 1961 | 9,219 | 118,249 | 5,730 | 133,198 | 7 | 3,523 | 3,530 | 8 | 249 | 1,355 |
| 1962 | 2,347 | 43,664 | 3,817 | 49,828 | 4,379 | 88,006 | 92,385 | 197 | 6,507 | 34,921 |
| 1963 | 3,970 | 44,142 | 2,333 | 50,445 | 840 | 64,170 | 65,010 | 90 | 3,548 | 20,096 |
| Subtotal | 35,793 | 678,472 | 203,604 | 917,869 | 11,175 | 209,832 | 221,007 | 379 | 14,562 | 79,588 |
| 1964 | 8,210 | 65,565 | 2,414 | 76,189 | 262 | 10,791 | 11,053 | 24 | 820 | 4,921 |
| 1965 | 13,344 | 181,435 | 25,957 | 220,736 | 159 | 20,317 | 20,476 | 45 | 924 | 5,707 |
| 1966 | 3,467 | 40,929 | 1,545 | 45,941 | 8196 | 62,162 | 70,358 | 233 | 7,081 | 44,790 |
| 1967 | 7,393 | 39,927 | 4,879 | 52,199 | 2679 | 54,163 | 56,842 | 160 | 3,614 | 22,195 |
| 1968 | 5,398 | 13,338 | 397 | 19,133 | 22063 | 166,392 | 188,455 | 577 | 12,639 | 72,535 |
| Total | 109,398 | 1,698,138 | 442,400 | 2,249,936 | 55,709 | 733,489 | 789,198 | 1,797 | 54,202 | 309,324 |

Source: Syrian Statistical Abstract, Various Issues

**Table 14. Allocations Under The Syrian Seven-Year (1955-1961)
Extraordinary Development Budget (Million SL)**

| | |
|---|--------|
| New projects | 301.25 |
| Of which | |
| Water projects | 87.50 |
| Road construction | 30.50 |
| Road improvements | 32.00 |
| Aerodromes | 27.50 |
| Extraordinary expenditure on defence | 45.00 |
| Settlement of Beduin Tribes | 10.00 |
| Additions to projects underway | 68.70 |
| Of which | |
| Large water projects | 5.38 |
| Silos | 10.00 |
| Yarmuk project | 3.75 |
| Well boring | 19.75 |
| Construction projects | 27.98 |
| Advances and loans to public bodies | 225.95 |
| Of which | |
| Ghab administration | 87.50 |
| Nationalisation of electricity system | 16.00 |
| Reconstruction of Hedjaz Railway | 13.33 |
| Petroleum Refinery | 80.00 |
| Capital contribution in public enterprises | 73.00 |
| Of which | |
| Latakia Port Company | 38.00 |
| Agricultural Bank | 20.00 |
| Industrial Bank | 10.00 |
| Total Expenditures | 668.90 |

Source: La Syrie Economique 1955, Annex 71.

Table 15. Investment Programme, The First Five-Year Plan (1960/61-1964/65) (Million SL)

| | Public Sector | Private Sector | Total Investment | Percent of Total |
|--|---------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Irrigation and Land Reclamation | 780 | 50 | 830 | 30.5 |
| Agriculture | 95 | 175 | 270 | 9.9 |
| Industry, Electricity, Petroleum, Mining | 240 | 269 | 509 | 18.7 |
| Transport and Communications | 387 | 150 | 537 | 19.7 |
| Education | 100 | 0 | 100 | 3.7 |
| Health | 46 | 10 | 56 | 2.1 |
| Housing | 15 | 245 | 260 | 9.6 |
| Change in Reserves | 0 | 90 | 90 | 3.3 |
| Other | 57 | 11 | 68 | 2.5 |
| Total | 1,720 | 1,000 | 2,720 | 100.0 |

Sources: La Planification Economique et Social en R.A.S. 1960-1970, Office Arabe de Presse et de Documentation, Damas: 40-52; and EIU, Economic Review of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, 1 November 1960, Special Appendix.

Table 16. Means of Financing, The First Five-Year Plan (1960/61-1964/65) (Million SL)

| Economic Sector | Five-Year Total | Percent of Total |
|---|-----------------|------------------|
| Public Sector | 1,720 | 63.2 |
| Of which | | |
| Ordinary Budget Surpluses | 420 | 15.4 |
| Municipal Budget Surpluses | 110 | 4.0 |
| Excess Receipts of Public Debt Fund | 98 | 3.6 |
| Revenues of State Lands | 26 | 1.0 |
| Surplus from Budgets of State Organisms | 131 | 4.8 |
| Excess Revenues of Social Insurance and Civil Service Funds | 145 | 5.3 |
| Profit on Oil and Mineral Exploitation | 100 | 3.7 |
| Foreign Credits | 640 | 23.5 |
| Sundry | 50 | 1.8 |
| Private Sector | 1,000 | 36.8 |
| Total | 2,720 | 100.0 |

Source: EIU, Economic Review of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, 1 November 1960, Special Appendix.

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